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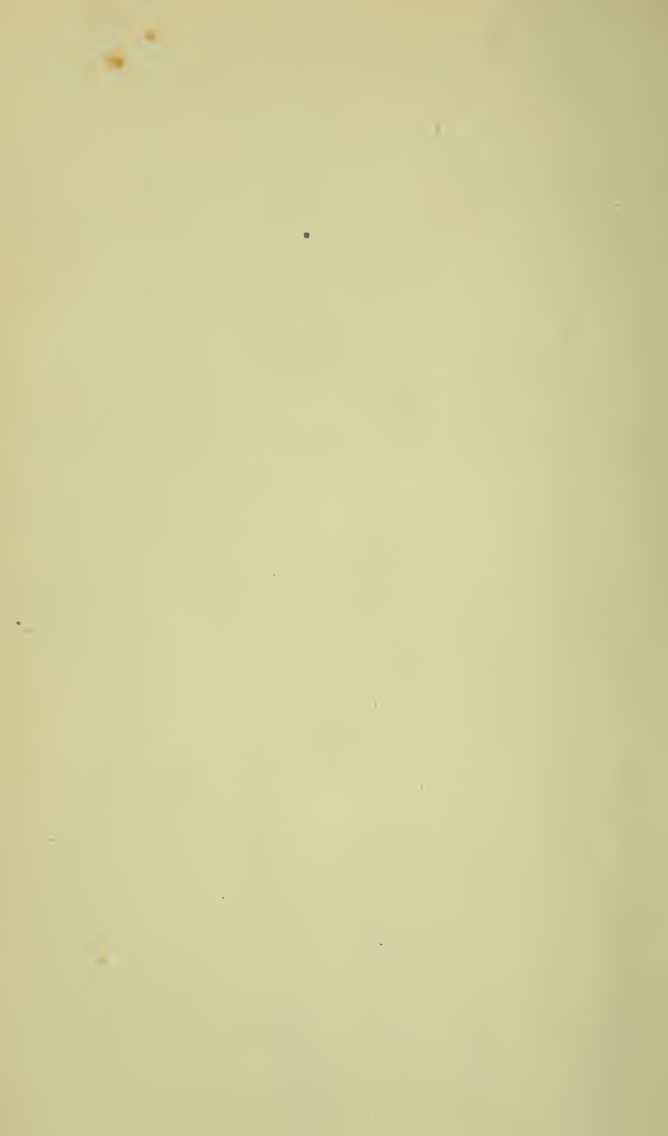
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BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE PATHWAY OF PROMISE"



STRAHAN & CO., PUBLISHERS

56 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON

1870

[*Thirtieth Thousand.*]

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THE Author begs to return his grateful thanks to the Rev. Dr J. S. B. MONSELL, who has so kindly allowed his Poems in "Parish Musings" to be made use of in this volume: as also to those other Christian friends whose names are not here mentioned, but whose writings have contributed to enrich the pages which follow.

May the effort "to speak a word to him that is weary" be attended with the Divine blessing, and may many of God's tried and suffering ones realise in their hours of weakness, pain, and distress, the soothing, elevating, and strengthening power which lies in Christian poetry!

In preparing the Prayers, advantage has to some extent been taken of materials already existing in other works, both ancient and modern. But they have been so frequently altered and corrected, and so often re-written, that it is now impossible to separate those portions which are derived or copied from the rest.

TO

JAMES TETLEY, Esq., M.D., &c. &c.,
TORQUAY.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

To you, with a grateful heart, I dedicate this volume. It was composed at intervals, during a period of much suffering, and while I was under your kind and watchful care as a physician. My desire has therefore been, that it should remain associated with your name.

It will serve, in some degree, to express my deep sense of obligation for the unceasing kindness I experienced from you during my residence at Torquay; and it may at times help to remind us both of many pleasant hours, which, as they passed by, strengthened more and more firmly the bonds of affection and of Christian fellowship between us.

I know how earnest is your desire, and how unremitting are your endeavours, to become the instrument of healing to the body, and of imparting comfort to the soul,—of leading the tried and suffering one to the only Healer of humanity—the great Physician; and withdrawn as I have been, in the providence of God

from my accustomed sphere of duty, I long to be a "fellow-labourer" with you in the latter part of your Christian work.

If, through the blessing of the Eternal Spirit, this volume shall convey to any child of affliction one gleam of soothing and hope, it will impart additional sweetness to the dealings of our heavenly Father, to whom all glory shall be ascribed, even to Him "who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

So may grace be imparted to us to improve the various dealings of our heavenly Father—that our hearts may be purified—our affections raised to the things which are above, and our earthly will brought into conformity with the will of God. May we be kept by faith ever looking up to Christ—dwelling in Him and He in us—so that "beholding, with open face, as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we all may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yours in Christian love,

J. A. M.

TORQUAY, *March* 1863.

“ It is not in the summer-tide of life
That the heart hoards its treasures; it is when
The storm is loud, and the rude hurricane
Of sorrow is abroad;—when solemn strife,
Such as may move the souls of constant men,
Is struggling in our bosoms, it is then
The heart collects her stores with wisdom rife.

“ For sadness teaches us the truth of things
Which had been hid beneath the crown of flowers
Which gladness wears; and the few silent hours
Of quiet heavenward thought which sorrow brings,
Are better than a life in pleasure's bowers,
Drinking the poisonous chalice which she pours
To quench our heavenlier spirits' murmurings.”

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L

The Chastening Rod.



JOB v. 17.

"Behold, *happy* is the man whom God correcteth : therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

HAPPINESS ! How little does the word mean when used in its ordinary sense ! We generally esteem those happy who enjoy uninterrupted health, and are apt to imagine that all happiness is gone when they are laid on a bed of sickness. But it is not so. To many of God's children the time of sore trial has been a time of peace and joy,—a time to which they have looked back with the deepest gratitude. Not that sickness is in itself desirable, but it is *precious*. In the buoyancy of health, when our sky is clear—our sun shining brilliantly—and our hearts are full of hope—oh, how prone are we to forget our true character of "strangers and pilgrims" here ! how insidiously does the world entwine itself around our heart-strings ! and how slowly do we advance in our heavenward journey. But when the sky is darkened, and the heavy clouds are rolling overhead,—

when we are laid prostrate,—weak and helpless,—then is it that we are brought to realise the frailty of our nature, and to become conscious of the truth that “*this* is not our rest.”

In the midst of our heedlessness, God summons us to an *audience*. He who knows the secrets of all hearts has seen that within us which must be corrected. He has discovered us wandering, and He would bring us back. He has watched us paying our homage to the creature, and He would remind us of our duty to Him,—the Creator. He has noticed the gradual yielding of the heart’s affections to things “seen and temporal,” and He would have us give more earnest heed to the things “unseen and eternal.”

“Happy is the man whom God correcteth.” Yes, assuredly, because it is a proof that He *careth* for us. We are not left to wander on without a Father’s care, but when our steps are fast nearing dangerous ground, His hand of love is outstretched;—when we are like to stumble on the dark mountains, He points to the path of safety;—when the siren voice is alluring us farther and farther away, He summons us back, and Himself condescends to

become our guide. But He will not commune with us in the midst of our heedlessness and folly. He must first draw us aside,—away from the scenes in which we foolishly delighted, away from the companions who were making us as worldly as themselves,—away even from our daily occupation;—He would have us be *alone* with Him.

We are laid on a sick-bed,—health vanishes like a dream,—friends begin to look anxious,—and we are made to pass through days and nights of weariness and pain. All nature wears a gloom around us. The sun still shines, but, for us, he is draped in sadness,—the flowers still bloom, but we cannot enjoy their fragrance,—the seasons change, but they seem ever tending towards dreary winter.

This is the *trial-time* of sickness. There is much to be endured,—much to be struggled against. Hard thoughts enter into the soul,—tempting, sinful, unholy thoughts,—which would lead us to question God's goodness and mercy;—as if He took delight in the sufferings and sorrows of men.

At such a time there is little peace or comfort—and often those who wish to advise and

comfort come too soon. We cannot, as yet, feel that "all is well;"—we are not, as yet, *happy* in being corrected. They would have us at once "be of good cheer," but it may not be.

And, methinks, God does not *intend* we *should*. We must be brought to solemn thought,—to heart-searching,—to earnest, importunate prayer. The love of the world must be weakened, the cords which knit our heart-strings must be snapt asunder, the longings for earth's giddy joys must be driven from the soul, *ere* we can have the "*happiness*" of a corrected child. But when again we turn "with our whole heart to the Lord," feeling not only that it is a Father's hand which has been laid on us, but that that Father desires by this correction to draw us more closely to Himself, *then* does He impart His promised peace; *then* does He give strength to bear meekly the burden laid upon us; and *then*, above all, is the blessed assurance realised, "Fear not, I am still with thee; I will not leave thee nor forsake thee."

Oh! who shall say that the "chastening time" is not a *precious* one when such is the

blessed result? who will for a moment doubt the happiness of the tried one when thus “the light of his Father’s countenance has been lifted up,” and the Lord has “strengthened him upon the bed of languishing?”

Fellow-sufferers! we may not all of us have realised this blessed condition as ours;—we may be *still* under the cloud;—as yet the struggle may be only *going on*. Let us not give way to despair. Let us *hope on*, let us pray for grace to see God’s hand in our sickness, to acknowledge that “of very faithfulness He has afflicted us,” and to learn those lessons He designs to teach us. Let us *wait* on the Lord. He will not long delay His coming. In some blessed way He *will* answer us. If He withhold the blessing of health, He will give the more precious one of His own presence. If He see meet to continue our pain and suffering, He will impart strength equal to bear them. If He prolong the time of bodily weakness, He will convey to the soul spiritual nourishment, and “strengthen us with all might in the inner man.”

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, to

whom belong the issues of life and death, look down with compassion upon Thy frail and afflicted servant. Oh, enable me to acknowledge the mercy of Thy dispensations, and, without murmuring or doubting, to accept all things as coming from Thee. Give me strength against all my temptations, and patience under all my sufferings. In the midst of all my fears and anxieties, I would give Thee thanks for Thy sparing mercy. I have grievously sinned, O Lord, and merit Thy hot displeasure. But I would cast myself wholly upon Thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Oh, hear me in the day of trouble. Send help from Thy sanctuary, and strengthen me out of Zion. Give me grace, O Lord, in remembrance of Thy past loving-kindness, so to trust in Thy goodness, to submit to Thy wisdom, and meekly to bear what Thou thinkest fit to lay upon me, that I may be brought to say at the last, "It was good for me that I was afflicted."

Grant this measure of grace unto Thy servant for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son.—
AMEN.

"Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known."—Ps. lxxvii. 19.

I ask'd for grace to lift me high
Above the world's depressing cares ;
God sent me sorrows ;—with a sigh
I said, He has not heard my prayers.

I ask'd for light, that I might see
My path along life's thorny road ;
But clouds and darkness shadow'd me,
When I expected light from God.

I ask'd for peace, that I might rest,
To think my sacred duties o'er ;
When lo ! such horrors fill'd my breast
As I had never felt before.

And oh, I cried, can this be prayer,
Whose plaints the steadfast mountains move,
Can this be heaven's prevailing care,—
And, O my God, is this Thy love ?

But soon I found that sorrow, worn
As Duty's garment, strength supplies ;
And out of darkness, meekly borne,
Unto the righteous light doth rise.

And soon I found that fears, which stirr'd
My startled soul God's will to do,
On me more real peace conferr'd
Than in life's calm I ever knew.

Then, Lord, in Thy mysterious ways,
Lead my dependent spirit on ;
And whensoever it kneels and prays,
Let it but say,—“Thy will be done.”

Let its one thought, one hope, one prayer,
Thine image seek—Thy glory see ;
Let every other grief and care
Be left confidingly to Thee !

J. S. B. MONSELL.

NEARER TO THEE.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee !
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be—
“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.”

Though like a wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness comes over me—
My rest a stone ;
Yet in my dreams I'll be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Then let the way appear
Steps unto heaven,
All that Thou sendest me,
In mercy given,
Angels to beckon me,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Or if on joyful wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upwards I fly,
Still all my song shall be—
“ Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.”

CAREY.

PAINFUL DISCIPLINE.

Sustain me, Lord, and let me neither shrink
Nor scorn the rod of painful discipline,
The cup my Father gives me I would drink,
And bend my will submissively to Thine.

I know the cross is needful, and I know
In love, and not in wrath, Thou chastenest ;
The sufferings Thy children undergo
But fit them sooner for eternal rest.

Our days are number'd ; God alone can see
The end from the beginning. He alone
Sees on the wide plains of futurity
The fruitage of the seeds our hands have sown.

Let us walk softly, for our God we bear
Much precious seed committed to our trust ;
Water'd with tears, and cherish'd with due care.
It will spring forth in beauty from the dust.

Deep are the chastenings that our spirits need,
To wean them from the idolatry of earth ;
Our flesh must tremble, and our hearts must
bleed,
Ere life can yield us fruits of any worth.

Are there not idols which usurp the throne
Where God alone should sit? How many a
heart

Bows down, if not before a god of stone,
Before a living, breathing counterpart !

Some cherish'd hope, or some perplexing care,
Follows our worldly hearts where'er we go,
And ghost-like haunts the holy house of prayer
When we would gladly turn from all below !

Oh, pity us, kind Father, and forgive
The weakness of our flesh, which overpowers
Our best intentions, and do Thou receive,
For Jesus' sake, these sinful hearts of ours.

Raise our affections higher, let us find
Enough to satisfy our souls in Thee,
And help us to resign with willing mind
Whatever tempts us to idolatry.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

II.

Vain is the Help of Man.

PSALM cxlvi. 8.

“Put not your *trust* in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”

IN *one* sense we are *very* dependent on each other. How does the infant cling to the arm of its mother! and how do we in sickness trust to the care and kindness of a faithful attendant! In every relation of life we are comforted, upheld, sustained by those around us—and especially is this the case in the family of Christ. Every member feels it is his solemn duty to support the weak,—to gladden the sorrowful,—to console the mourner. If he does *not*, he has not the mind of Christ,—he has not been drinking in the spirit of Him who came “to bind up the broken-hearted, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit.”

The help we are sometimes privileged to give one another is very precious. The kindly look;—how often has it chased sadness from the brow, even as the bright ray of sunshine chases the dark cloud from the heavens! The

18 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

word of sympathy ;—how often has it sounded in the secret chambers of the soul,—awakening gladness, where all was silence and gloom ! And who shall tell how often God's sweet promises, whispered gently by the sick-bed, have calmed and tranquillised the troubled soul, even as of old the words of Jesus, " Peace, be still," soothed the tempestuous billows, so that " immediately there was a great calm ! "

But in *another* and higher sense, it is true that " vain is the help of man." We can only *effectually* help each other when we are " instruments in God's hand." He makes use of us as His servants, and when we feel and realise our responsibility as such, then our feeble efforts are blessed, and we become " sons of consolation." Apart from this, of what avail is it that the physician prescribes, or that the minister visits the chamber of sickness ? Health will not return at the bidding of the one, nor comfort flow from the exhortations of the other. It matters not that there is the exercise of the highest skill, and the utterance of the most thrilling eloquence. Still the burden of disease will bear down the body, and the load of anxiety oppress the spirit. But when the Di-

vine blessing is vouchsafed, and the Spirit pours forth His promised influence, all is changed. The pulse beats again with health,—the soul is freed from its agitations and alarms.

Shall I, then, “*trust* in the son of man?” Nay, rather, shall I not trust in Him who alone “hath the issues of life and death?” My heart may be filled with gratitude and love to those who have been the “instruments in God’s hand,” and they may become dear to me even as my own flesh; but I will not “put my *trust*” in them: I will look higher far—to *Him* who has promised to watch over me with a Father’s care, and whose power nothing can withstand. I will look to Him who is seated as my Advocate and Elder Brother at the Father’s right hand, and who has promised to “undertake for me,” and to plead, in my behalf, the merits of His own most precious blood. I will look to Him who alone can carry home the truth to my heart, even the Comforting Spirit,—at whose bidding doubt and fear must vanish, and hope and joy take possession of my soul.

Yes, suffering child! it is ever well to look beyond the creature; to realise the fact that *only* one Arm is all-powerful,—one Heart all-

20 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

loving,—one Ear ever open,—one Eye never closed ;—and that to Him, and Him alone, “the secrets and sorrows, the wants and desires of the heart,” are known. Just as far as we trace God’s hand in what our fellow-creatures do in our behalf, earthly love and sympathy and kindness will be helpful and comforting to us. When we forget or overlook this, we will fail to derive any benefit,—any lasting comfort from their efforts.

And there are paths of suffering and trial into which sometimes God calls His children, where the dearest friend cannot follow,—where no word of *human* sympathy can reach the trembling, solitary pilgrim. Every step must be trodden, either *alone*, in darkness and terror, or,—oh ! blessed companionship,—with a heavenly Friend and Guide, whose accents of love will fall sweetly on the ear, and calm the storm of agitation and alarm. Our heavenly Father will not,—if we unreservedly cast ourselves on His care,—permit any enemy however powerful, any trial however great, to crush or overwhelm us. He will give us “help from trouble,” when “vain is the help of man.” He will be our “hiding-place,” and will “compass us about

with songs of deliverance." He will "go before us, and make crooked places straight, rough places plain."

But, if we desire to have it so, we must relinquish creature-confidence, and put our "trust in the Lord." We must say with David, "He is my refuge, and my fortress; my God: in Him will I trust." "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." This, indeed, is the great lesson which God designs to teach His children, to lead them through the chequered experience of life, to realise more and more that He is the only true, satisfying portion of their souls,—the only safe refuge and resting-place "in time of trouble."

And, oh! surely, it is a comforting and blessed thought, that "*He careth* for us,"—that all our concerns are full of interest in His sight. Our fellow-men may refuse *their* sympathy. *He* never will. *They* may be distant from us in the hour of need. *He* is "a *present* help in the time of trouble." *They* may be occupied and

22 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

engrossed with self. *His* ear “is ever open to *our* cry.” *They* may become wearied of helping us. He is *ever* “touched by our infirmities,” and ever ready to heal our woes. Let us, then, with feelings of increasing love and gratitude, as we meditate on the care of our heavenly Father, reveal to Him all our wants and weaknesses, all our sorrows and anxieties, all our sins and shortcomings; assured that, of His infinite mercy, He will bestow upon us pardon, peace, help, hope, and joy.

Heavenly Father, I would draw near unto Thee with humble confidence, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I thank Thee for all Thy past goodness, for Thy watchful providence, Thine unceasing care. I bless Thee for the gracious offers of mercy which Thou hast given me, and I pray that Thou wouldst enable me to place all my confidence in Him whom Thou hast sent to seek and save the lost. Oh, may His precious blood wash out the dark stain of sin from my soul. Blessed Saviour, make me Thine in heart and soul. Oh, give me Thy Spirit. May He purify my nature and impress Thine image on my heart.

Help me, O Lord, in this time of sickness, to look up to Thee as my only help. Keep me from all repining thoughts, and, in remembrance of Thy past loving-kindness, help me now to trust in Thy goodness and to submit to Thy will. Make me patient, humble, and resigned, and enable me to bring forth more fruit to Thy glory. Strengthen me ever, to show the power of Thy grace, in my humility, gentleness, love, and gratitude, to all who help my infirmities and show kindness to me. May I ever regard them as instruments in Thy hands, and able to bring me comfort according to Thy pleasure. Give me, O God, a simple, entire dependence upon Thee, and enable me in all things to commit my way unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.—AMEN.

"I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord."—
ISA. lxiii. 7.

My God, my Saviour, sweet to be
Dependent every hour on Thee !
Amid life's bitterness, how sweet
Thy loving-kindnesses to meet !

24 *VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.*

Sweet to hold converse with Thee, Lord !
And hear Thee answer by Thy Word ;
Thy love in all my life to trace,
And live that life—the child of grace.

To feel the very light and glow
Of heaven's own gladness here below ;
And drink those sparkling streams, whose rills
Rise 'mid the everlasting hills !

None, walking as Thy Word hath taught,
Have ever sought, and found Thee not ;
Or brought to Thee a single care,
'Thou didst not either take or share.

My God, my Saviour, grant that I
May with Thee live, and in Thee die !
'Tis all my spirit asks, but less
Thou know'st would not be happiness.

PARISH MUSINGS.

GOD OUR STRENGTH.

Man, in his weakness, needs a stronger stay
Than fellow-men, the holiest and the best ;
And yet we turn to them from day to day,
As if in them our spirits could find rest.

Gently untwine our childish hands, that cling
To such inadequate supports as these,
And shelter us beneath Thy heavenly wing,
Till we have learn'd to walk alone with ease.

Help us, O Lord, with patient love to bear
Each other's faults, to suffer with true meek-
ness ;

Help us each other's joys and griefs to share,
But let us turn to Thee alone in weakness.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

PEACE.

Swollen as the troubled sea,
Lord, I feel this heart to be ;
Restless on account of sin,
Lord, there is no peace within.

Till Thou bid its passions cease,
Lord, it never can have peace ;
Never change its wicked will,
Till Thou whisper, " Peace, be still !"

26 *VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.*

Every idle hope begone,
Speaking peace where there is none ;
None but Jesus, none but He,
Peace can ever speak to me.

Till I feel my sins removed,
And, assured that I am loved,
Lean upon my Saviour's breast,
I can never think of rest.

III.

The Cry of Distress.

2 SAM. xxii. 7.

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God : and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.”

It is related of King Asa, that an alarming and painful disease came upon him—he was afflicted with a grievous bodily calamity ; and his illness continued to increase, “until his disease was exceeding great.” Yet, although on a former occasion he had gathered “all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them, out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon,” and had “entered into a solemn covenant with them to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul,” we are told that, when sickness came upon him, he forgot his promise ; and this is the melancholy declaration of Scripture, “In his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.”

What a sad contrast between this sinful forgetfulness, and the heartfelt urgency of the royal psalmist ! What wonder that the next thing

recorded of the one is his death, and by the other, that the "Lord heard his voice, and his cry did enter into His ears." Asa's cry of distress, being made only to man, brought no relief: the psalmist's prayer to the Most High was heard and answered.

Which of these examples have *we* followed? When pain and suffering have laid hold upon us, to whom, in *our* extremity, have we made our appeal? Has it been to feeble, impotent man, whose every effort is powerless without God's blessing? or has it been to Him who, in His holy temple, hearkens to the cry of the humblest, the weakest of His children?

Alas! have we not to acknowledge that many a time in our distress we have looked for help *only* to man? We have made our appeal to them, believing that they could deliver us, and we have wondered that the sickness was not removed—the disease not cured.

Asa's sin was, not his having applied to the physicians, but his having neglected, first of all, "to seek the Lord." We have been guilty, not in having had recourse to means, but in trusting solely to their efficacy.

Whatever be our danger or disease, we can

only hope for deliverance by immediately “calling upon the Lord, and crying to our God.” For is not this the end He has in view? He does not visit us with sore calamity only to scare and frighten us away from Him, but that our danger may drive us to Him. He permits terror to lay hold upon us that we may take refuge in His arms. He suffers our faith to fail that we may cling more confidently to His almighty arm. He delays the removal of disease that we may become more importunate in prayer,—that we may become more patient, resigned, and submissive to His will. When these ends are accomplished, He speaks the word, He dispels our fears, He grants our desires, He answers our prayers.

“A little while, through grief and care,
Thy servants, Lord, their cross must bear :
Still let this thought our hearts beguile—
It is but for a *little while*.”

“The cry of distress.” Oh! who but a doubting, faithless one would ever imagine that the God of love would be indifferent when it came “into His ears!” He, our Father, our covenant-God,—He “who has not spared His own Son,

but delivered Him up to the death for us," shall He refuse to hear our cry when danger or calamity threatens to overwhelm us? Away with such doubts! "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me," was the assurance of the Saviour to His disciples; and still the same words are true regarding all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in love that He lays His hand upon us, in love that He seems to deny our prayers, in love that He delays to send "help out of Zion." To the patient, oftentimes, the remedies of the physician are painful and trying,—he cannot realise how necessary it is that severe measures should be adopted, to check the progress of disease,—to bring health to the feeble, sinking frame. So neither are *we* able to comprehend the necessity there is, that we should have to undergo the severe ordeal of sickness and trial, in order that the inward malady may be arrested, and the health of the soul be restored and promoted. He alone who knows "the end from the beginning" can perceive the "need be" for painful discipline,—for sad bereavements,—overwhelming sorrows and severe reverses. But how many are the recorded instances of "man's extremity" being "God's

opportunity ! ” The believer, it may have been, had become self-confident, unwatchful,—less earnest in prayer, less distrustful of self, and the afflicting hand was laid upon him. He was withdrawn from the world,—left to “ commune with his own heart and make diligent search,”—to review, in the solitariness of the sick-chamber, the devious path he had been treading, the slippery places on which he had been, too securely, standing. And, in this self-examination, he found cause for deep self-abasement and humiliation before God. He was brought to say with David,—“ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness ; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” Then was it, that he found peace restored and comfort imparted,—then was it, that he felt it was “ good for him to be afflicted,” and realised, that in “ God’s favour is life,” and “ His loving-kindness is better than life.”

Suffering child of God ! this, too, may be thy experience, but doubt not for a moment the love,

the faithfulness of thy heavenly Father,—“commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Murmur not against the dispensation, which, though painful, is yet necessary; but pray that the Holy Spirit would sanctify your trial, and enable you, entirely and willingly, to surrender yourself to God,—to do or suffer, what He may see meet to appoint. Let thoughts of His past loving-kindness and mercy fill your soul, and rest assured, that “He will not *now* fail you, nor forsake you.” An immediate answer to prayer *may* be withheld,—but, delay is not denial; and, when God stirs up His people to call upon Him, it is just because He means to grant their desire, and in His own good time—“strengthen them with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.” “He who has showed you great and sore troubles shall quicken you again, and bring you up from the depths of the earth; He shall increase your greatness, and comfort you on every side.” In the full assurance of faith cast yourself upon Him, and all shall be well. He

has not utterly forsaken thee, for He is even now dealing with thee,—and, so precious art thou in His sight, that every throb of pain, every cry of anguish is noted by Him. Present suffering is permitted, *only* that thy soul may be restored to health,—be refined and purified in the furnace, and that heavenly communion with thy God and Saviour may, henceforth, be more precious, close, and endearing. “We must through *much* tribulation enter the kingdom;” and, as the great Captain of our Salvation was made “perfect through sufferings,” so must it be with every disciple, who would “walk even as He also walked,” and who desires to be among that blessed company of whom the Saviour prayed—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.”

We might, indeed, prefer ease, comfort, health, worldly prosperity,—an immediate answer to all our prayers, but the lesson must be taught us, that holiness is of more importance than ease,—the crucifixion of our wills than bodily comfort,—and the renewal of the soul than health, prosperity, or any earthly blessing.

If, then, we are still left to tread the path of suffering and trial;—it is not that our “cry of distress” has been unheard;—it is not that our prayer for deliverance has been unheeded, but that God’s time has not yet come for delivering us out of trouble;—that He would have us drawn yet closer to Him,—our hearts yet more softened and sanctified,—every feeling of impatience or murmuring subdued, and the Divine lineaments drawn more clearly and indelibly upon us. When this gracious work is accomplished,—when, yielding ourselves meekly to Him we say, “Lord, do with me as Thou wilt; I know that Thy judgments are right, and that in very faithfulness Thou art afflicting me,” oh, then, we shall find, that “His merciful kindness is for our comfort, according to His word,”—we shall realise, that while scourging, He is also supporting,—while wounding, He is pouring in oil and wine,—that, as our sufferings abound, so our consolations abound also, and, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy. We will take up the language of David, saying, “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears.”

Observe the expression of the Psalmist—*“my God.”* He felt that, though “in distress,” God was still *his* God. How similar to the anguished cry of our dear Redeemer as He hung upon the cross!—What suffering or sorrow could be compared with that which He then endured for us!—Who shall describe what is meant by the appalling inquiry, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Yet, as if no anguish,—no sorrow,—no amount of suffering, could, for a single moment, interrupt the current of love between the Father and the Son, the term of tenderest endearment mingles with the notes of agony,—*“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”* As if He had said,—“Thou art still *my* Father,—that love which, from eternity, existed between us, knows no change,—that communion which, here on earth, has hitherto been uninterrupted, is uninterrupted still, and, draining the last dregs of the cup of anguish, I cry to Thee, *‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’*”

Christian! pray that this spirit may be yours,—that, amid all your sufferings and trials, you may be able to retain your trust and confidence in God as your God,—*your* covenant God in Christ. His hand may be laid heavily upon

you,—and, trial after trial may fall to your lot, but the tie which unites you to your “Father in heaven,” cannot be severed by such calamities as these. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love”—is the sacred pledge that you will never be forsaken,—never be without a Father’s care, or beyond the reach of a Father’s love. He will mingle for you joy and sorrow, as He sees best for you. He will correct you when you need correction, and chasten you when you need chastisement, but His love towards you will remain unaltered. And, onwards as you pursue your heavenward journey, you will be strengthened by His Almighty arm,—guided by His unerring wisdom,—and protected by His ever-watchful care. Still hope, still struggle on,—still feel assured, that He will be “mindful” of you, and that, when His purposes with you on earth have been accomplished, He will conduct you safely to His heavenly kingdom.

O merciful God, who seest all our weakness, and the troubles we labour under, have regard unto the prayer of Thy servant, who now implores Thy comfort, Thy direction, and Thy help. Grant me grace neither to grieve nor re-

pine under this Thy chastisement. May I be enabled to regard my troubles as an exercise of my faith, and patience, and humility; and may I improve all my afflictions to the good of my soul and to Thy glory. Thou alone knowest what is best for me. Let me never dispute Thy goodness or wisdom, but ever trust Thee, even when I cannot trace Thee. Oh, help me, good Lord, that I may cheerfully suffer and obediently do Thy will, and choose what Thou choolest, and observe the ways of Thy providence, and revere Thy judgments, and wait for Thy mercy, and delight in Thy dispensations, and expect that all things shall work together for good to them that love Thee.

Grant this, O Father, through Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour.—AMEN.

“O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”—

ISA. xxxviii. 14.

Lord, I'm oppress'd! oh, undertake
For me, for my Redeemer's sake!
Unclean, unworthy, I confess;
Yet, oh, accept His righteousness!

On Him alone I dare repose !
From Him alone my comfort flows ;
And all I am, or hope to be,
I owe, through Him, my God, to Thee !

A wanderer—His mercy sought !
A slave—His blood my freedom bought !
And dead in trespasses and sin—
His voice awoke life's pulse within !

Hear such a monument of grace,
Presuming thus to seek Thy face :
Accept my prayer ; and for Thy Son,
Oh, perfect Thou the work begun !

Low at Thy footstool, Lord, I lie ;
Smile on me here, or else I die—
Smile on me ! nor let sin destroy
The bursting blossoms of my joy.

Since faint and feeble, weak and low,
I cannot stay, yet dare not go ;
I have no strength, no hope, no plea,
Unless Thou undertake for me !

J. S. B. MONSELL.

Why restless, why so weary,
My soul, why so cast down ?
Is all around so dreary,
And hath the cross no crown ?
Where is the God who found thee,
Who once could make thee glad ?
Are not His arms around thee,
Then wherefore art thou sad ?

Oh, trust the Lord who bought thee !
Oh, trust the sinner's Friend !
The wondrous love that sought thee,
Will keep thee to the end ;
Will give a glorious morrow
To this thy night of pain,
And make thy dews of sorrow
Like " shining after rain !"

PARISH MUSINGS.

IV.

Past Joys.

“The joy of our heart is ceased.”

THE retrospect of the past, in its power to excite joy or grief, depends very much on our present condition. So long as we are *prosperous*, we can look back with feelings of delight,—so long as we are *healthy*, we can think of the years that have gone by with pleasure,—so long as there are no *broken arcs* in the family circle, we can recall the days of childhood with joyful emotion. And it is the same with our spiritual nature; so long as we have the *inward consciousness* that the light of God’s countenance is shining upon us, we are glad and joyous,—so long as we have *peace, calmness, rest* of soul, we can think of other days without a tear. But let *events* change, and how changed are *we* ! When prosperity departs, what pain do we often experience, in recalling scenes which can no more return ! When disease lays us prostrate, how sadly do we think of the time of health ! And when inward soul-trouble comes upon us, when we are sick at heart, how do we cry with the

patriarch,—“ Oh that it were with me as in months past !”

Reader, has not some such feeling been experienced by you in the time of sickness and trial ? Perhaps, it has been your lot to be summoned to the endurance of trial, when your sky seemed brightest,—when hope filled your breast, and the pathway of life was fair and pleasant. Suddenly the sky became overcast,—health declined, the rose faded from the cheek, the canker-worm gnawed at the vitals, and weakness and weariness took the place of strength and vigour ? No longer able to mingle in the crowd, destitute even of strength to discharge accustomed duty,—oh, have not *past joys*,—the recollection of days of health, of innocent enjoyment with friends you dearly loved, of scenes in which without one sigh of weariness you were wont to be an actor,—have not these things come upon you with painful intensity, during days and nights of languor, suffering, and wakefulness ?

We have all felt this,—all of us, at least, who know what is meant by failing strength, by increasing debility, by helpless prostration, by long-continued sickness. At such times.

we must pray earnestly for grace,—grace to look backward, with grateful hearts, on all the way in which the Lord our God hath led us,—grace to become resigned to the loss we may have sustained,—grace to realise, that *good* is intended and not *evil*, in our being robbed of earthly enjoyment, that we may more largely partake of heavenly delights, and hold closer and nearer communion, with the Father of our spirits and the Redeemer of our souls. For, short-sighted and ignorant as we are, we are prone to attach a value to things which would really prove injurious to us, and to regard as worthless that which will become most conducive to our eternal happiness. How frequently does worldly prosperity, for instance, retard the spiritual advancement and well-being of the soul ! The Christian becomes more and more entangled by the snares and deceitfulness of riches. He relaxes his diligence,—he sits with folded hands, when the work of God is summoning him to exertion,—he becomes satisfied with present attainments, instead of “pressing on towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and, unchastened and

unchecked,—undisturbed by sorrow or suffering, he imagines that “all is well.” But, suddenly, he is startled by some calamity or laid prostrate by disease. The sunshine of worldly prosperity gives place to the dark, thick cloud of adversity, and the language of his soul is,—“The joy of my heart is ceased.” Could he trace, however, the merciful design of his heavenly Father, he would know, that it was to rouse him from his lethargy,—to summon him to holy, active exertion,—to draw him away from scenes and pursuits in which there was no true and lasting enjoyment, that he had to become the tenant of the sick-room, or to be stripped of what he deemed the *joys* of his heart. *There* would he be taught, that the pleasures he had so eagerly sought after, were periling the safety of his soul,—that the voice of God was unheard and unheeded, when the heart was only filled with earthly delight,—and that it was to make him partake of heavenly and abiding joy, that he was called to enter the fiery furnace, and pass through the ordeal of sickness or misfortune.

And so, too, has it often been, with those whose enjoyments were more innocent, and less hurtful to the soul,—whose *joy*, perhaps, sprung

from sweet intercourse with loved and cherished friends, around whom their heart-strings were, all too fondly, entwined. In their society and fellowship they took delight from day to day, and along life's path they journeyed side by side, unthinking of any sad hour of separation. But, the spoiler came,—the shadow of death enwrapt them in its folds, and they had to bid a long farewell to those who had been their earthly idols. Standing beside the lifeless corpse, or committing to their last resting-place the ashes of the loved one, they have cried in the anguish of their spirit—"the joy of our heart is ceased." Life appeared a dreary, solitary waste,—and, like Rachel weeping for her children, they "refused to be comforted." But why the heavy stroke? why the sad bereavement? Was it that our heavenly Father took delight in the sorrows of His children? Oh! no, it was not so. It was to draw the hearts of mourning relatives nearer to Himself,—it was to raise their affections to those things which are above,—it was to teach them, most impressively, that, having now one tie fewer upon earth, they had one more in heaven.

“ Affliction, when it spreads around,
May seem a field of woe ;
Yet there, at last, the happy fruits
Of righteousness shall grow.”

We might appeal to those whose afflictions have been sanctified, and they would tell us, that love,—only love, had portioned out their trials, and that, bitter as had been the cup given them to drink, the “ present joy ” of a Saviour’s abiding presence was far more precious, than the “ past joys ” which had been taken from them. They realised the nearness and the love of God,—the grace and tender sympathy of their Redeemer, as they had never done before. They were enabled to unbosom to Him all their griefs, and to pour out their hearts before Him. They learned, by how slight a tenure we hold all earthly enjoyments,—by how enduring a covenant we are made inheritors of all heavenly blessing. And thus, by the sanctifying power of the Spirit, the stroke of affliction, which had opened the floodgates of grief, opened also a well-spring of joy, with which “ a stranger intermeddleth not,” and which “ no man taketh from them.”

Had their day continued all sunshine, their earthly joys ever increasing, and their health, ease, and worldly comfort suffering no break,—they would soon have forgotten God,—soon have wandered far from the Saviour,—soon have become unmindful of their true character and destiny.

“ It needs our hearts be wean’d from earth,
It needs that we be driven,
By loss of every earthly stay,
To seek our joys in heaven.

“ Yes, we must follow in the path
Our Lord and Saviour run,
We must not find a resting-place
Where He we love had none.”

Oh ! then, afflicted suffering one, was it not in mercy that the dark shadow crossed your path,—that the hand of love arrested you,—and that you were called to relinquish the fond idol you had so ardently loved, or to become yourself the tenant of the sick-room and the sick-bed, with their weariness and their pain,—their days of languor and their nights of restlessness ?

Your heavenly Father had wise and gracious ends to serve, and He accomplished His purpose in you and by you, although not by the way you expected or desired. He meant to purify, and mould, and soften your heart; by His Holy Spirit, to bring your will into entire conformity with His own,—to wean your affections from earth, and to raise them upward to heaven;—and this divine purpose He will continue still to carry on, until your heart is thoroughly cleared from dross, the body of sin mortified, and you are fitted for that everlasting home which the Saviour is preparing for you.

Oh, then, think not so much of “past joys,” as of securing, in every hour of sickness and sorrow, the peace, the comfort, the joy of a “present Saviour.” With Him by your side, you will be able to “rejoice in tribulation;”—you will bid it welcome;—you will cherish it as a heavenly visitant—a messenger sent from above with healing to your soul. You will find “the bow in the cloud”—the Saviour’s light arising out of darkness—His form upon the troubled waters; and, if He hush them not, He will say to your soul, “Fear not, for I am with thee.”

“ Look not mournfully into the past :
It comes not back again ;
Wisely improve the present—it is thine ;
Go forth to meet the shadowy future
Without fear, and with a manly heart.”

The remembrance of “past joys” will not then be hurtful or painful to you. Your “present joy” will be better far; the joy of near and sweet communion with your God and Saviour,—the joy of so hearkening to His voice of love, that pain and sorrow are utterly forgotten,—the joy of being so “alone with God,” that every murmuring is hushed, every disquietude removed,—the joy of having such a manifestation of the Redeemer’s glory to your soul, as will shed a calm and blissful radiance around every prospect, and prove the earnest of that better heritage, where “there is fulness of joy for evermore.”

Oh, then, look earnestly to Him,—try to realise His presence,—hearken for His voice of love; and, instead of murmuring because past joys cannot be recalled, pray that “present joy” may be imparted,—that the Saviour may hold communion with you, and pour into your heart

that "joy which no man taketh from you,"—
that the language of your soul may be—

"Lord, as Thou wilt ! nor this, nor that I will :

Lord, as Thou wilt, so only let it be !

Lord, I am Thine ! Thy pleasure, Lord, fulfil !

I, as a child, will lift mine eyes to Thee."

Gracious and merciful Father ! who dost not willingly afflict the children of men ; but dost rebuke and chasten those whom Thou lovest : look down upon me, Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me for Christ's sake ! I acknowledge the justice and the mercy of Thy dealings with me. Oh, keep me from murmuring because past joys are no longer mine. Give me to feel that Thou knowest the discipline I need, and that earthly joy cannot impart heavenly peace. Although Thou hast visited me with sickness, and laid Thine hand upon me, oh grant that I may still have inward joy and comfort. May I have grace to surrender all things into Thy hands, referring the disposal of them to Thee—and that heartily and fully. Even in the darkest night of sorrow may I cast anchor in Thee, and repose on Thee when I see

no light, remembering that this is not my home, nor the place of my rest, but the place of my trial and conflict; and that my home is above. Good Lord and Father, of Thine infinite mercy Thou hast called me to eternal glory; save me, then, I pray Thee, from ever being so ungrateful as to repine against Thee, and so to drown precious heavenly blessings in any little trouble that befalls me; give me more deep thoughts of the joys of the world to come; lift my eyes to that state where Thy saints now rejoice before Thee; direct my steps to it, and lead me towards it, cheerful and unwearied, by an assured hope that the joyful day will at length come, when, as Christ's disciple, I too shall be admitted into the fullest light. Oh, give me grace to cast myself wholly on Thy mercy, and neither to despise Thy chastenings, nor faint under them; but, with resignation to Thy blessed will, and acknowledgment of Thy paternal love, to speak good of Thy name, now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—AMEN.

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

When earthly joys glide fast away,
When hopes and comforts flee ;
When foes beset, and friends betray,
I turn, my God, to Thee !

Thy nature Lord, no change can know ;
Thy promise still is sure ;
And ills can ne'er so hopeless grow
But Thou canst find a cure.

Deliverance comes most bright and blest
At danger's darkest hour ;
And man's extremity is best
To prove Almighty power.

High as Thou art, Thou still art near
When suppliants succour crave ;
And as Thine ear is swift to hear,
Thine arm is strong to save.

"Oh that I were as in months past!"—JOB xxix. 2.

Oh for the warmth of other days,
The fervour and the fire
That breathed through every song of praise,
And kindled each desire !
That gave the depth of holy love
To the still voice of prayer,
When first it wing'd its way above,
To plead a Saviour there !

Oh for that love, so deep, so true,—
That first young love of heaven,
That fill'd this soul, when first it knew
Its sins were all forgiven !
When first it felt the saving power
Of Christ's atoning blood ;
And in that hope-reviving hour,
Gave itself up to God !

But colder now,—more careless grown,
This heart seems hard or dead ;
The love once felt is now unknown,
The faith once fervent,—fled !

While even He, whose dawning ray
Of love such comfort brought,
'Mid blessings of a perfect day,
Is now almost forgot.

Time was when prayer was a delight,
And precious was the word :
To muse therein both day and night,
And commune with the Lord !
But now, a privilege no more,
'Tis duty only moves ;
Because I fear Him, I adore,—
And not because He loves.

Oh for the warmth of other days !—
And yet, how vain must be
Such wishes, Lord, unless my ways
With Thy commands agree !
For love must die, and joy must cease,
When man forgets his God ;
And paths of pleasantness and peace
The careless never trod.

Lord, make this heart more purely Thine,
And such fond love supply,
'Mid feeling's premature decline,
That faith may never die !

So shall each careless, cold desire
Once more devoutly burn ;
And all the fervour and the fire
Of Heaven's first love return.

PARISH MUSINGS.

"And they went and told Jesus."—MATT. xiv. 12.

Go, *happy one*, and tell to Jesus,
When thou art full of joy ;
He gives thee all, and to His praise
Thy life on earth employ.

Go, *anxious one*, and tell to Jesus
Thy conflicts and thy fears ;
He loves to bear thee on thy way,
To carry all thy cares.

Go, *tempted one*, and tell to Jesus
How hard the fight of sin ;
How oft the heart is sore dismay'd,
When strife is strong within.

Go, *suff'rer*, tell thy heart to Jesus,
He marks thy life of pain ;
And longs to welcome thee above,
And place thee there to reign.

Go, *mourner*, tell thy griefs to Jesus,
Weep only at His feet ;
Thy tears He 'll keep, and give thee back
His sympathy so sweet.

Go, *weeping one*, and tell to Jesus
The anguish of thy heart ;
In all life's sorrows, which are thine,
He ever takes a part.

How sweet to feel, while still below,
Each sorrow we may tell
To One who trod this "vale of tears,"
And knows its sadness well.

E. F. DE M.

FOR A SUFFERING BELIEVER.

And shall a sinful worm complain
Of weary days, and nights of pain ?
Shall I arraign the will of God,
Who bought me with His precious blood ?

Are not my times within His hand ?
Are not my pains at His command ?
Do I not hear Him sweetly say,
"Strength shall be given as thy day ?"

Oh, may these light afflictions prove
Means to increase my faith and love !
And may I meekly bear the cross,
In mercy sent to purge my dross !

Am I not His—His ransom'd one—
A burning brand from Satan won ?
Have I a grief He does not share,
A pain He helps me not to bear ?

Oh no ! Emmanuel guards my bed ;
His arms of love support my head ;
Like John, I lean upon His breast,
And find in Him a perfect rest.

Then, welcome trials, welcome pains,
Since Jesus thus my head sustains ;
He will receive my parting breath,
And guide me through the vale of death !

V.

Submission.

LUKE xi. 2.

“Thy will be done.”

SUCH is part of the prayer which our Saviour taught His disciples. It is familiar to us all. We have lisped it at a mother's knee, we have given utterance to it in the house of prayer, and in the secrecy of our closets we have offered it up at the throne of the heavenly grace. And yet, how seldom have we fully realised its import, and given our willing, heartfelt response to the petition! The truth is, we can only fathom its deep meaning, and attain the power of saying “Amen” from the heart, *by degrees*. And the place where our heavenly Father oftenest imparts the power, is the *chamber of sickness*. There we feel the intense *reality* of the spiritual struggle,—the battlings of the human will against the Divine,—the wrestlings between doubt and trust, between earth and heaven, between things seen and temporal, and things unseen and eternal. It is for the very purpose of

teaching us *submission*, that trials, and sickness, and sorrows come upon us.

In health and prosperity our great desire is *self-pleasing*. We are ever prone to follow the suggestions of our own hearts, and to seek for happiness in the pursuit of things seen and temporal. Our own will, and not the will of God, is too often the ruling motive of our actions. The question is not, "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?"—but "how shall I most easily—how shall I most speedily—secure the attainment of my own selfish wishes and desires?" We may be unwilling to acknowledge even to ourselves, that we are moved and impelled by love of self;—we may succeed in satisfying conscience that, because we perform certain religious duties,—are careful to avoid certain sins, and put forth our energies at times in furthering some Christian enterprise, we may have leave to follow the bent of our inclinations in the main;—in a word, that, in the reluctant giving up of a part of this world, we may, in the rest, be worldly without risk or blame. And, unless arrested by Divine grace,—revived and quickened anew by the Spirit of God; self,—the world,—the pursuits and pleasures of time, will

gain such entire mastery, that faith is weakened, love waxes cold, and all spiritual energy is cramped and paralysed. And this, because there is a natural agreement between our hearts—(even when renewed by God's grace)—and earthly things;—because it is far easier to follow our own wills than the will of God;—because the spirit of submission will not enter into the soul which is engrossed and troubled, merely about this busy world of trifles. Therefore God, who desires the true happiness of His children,—who will not suffer them to become any more the willing captives of sin and Satan,—and whose purpose is to conform them to the image of His dear Son,—lays His hand upon them, that in the quiet and retirement of the sick-chamber, they may be brought to solemn thought,—that they may be refined and, purified, till the dross of selfishness, impatience, and worldliness is removed from their hearts, and they are brought to say, as they never could before, “Father, Thy will be done.”

Nor is this ordeal through which they pass, of short duration. Hard and difficult is the lesson they have to learn. The desire for self-pleasing,—the longing for earth's delights,—the

yearnings for temporal comfort and ease,—all must be rooted out of the heart, to give place to a meek, patient, and submissive spirit. The whole consciousness must be penetrated with a sense of sin;—of the evil done,—the good left undone,—the waywardness and folly,—the impatience and fretfulness, manifested in the past. The soul must be driven away from everything on which it rested, and in which it delighted, to the foot of the cross,—*there* to give up itself—its sin—the will—the affections—the whole heart—into God's hands,—to be disposed of at His pleasure, without one resisting, one opposing thought.

Its language must be, “O Lord God, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth, to Thee I come, sorrowing and repenting. Lord, I lament before Thee, that I have so resisted Thy blessed will, that I have so long followed my own sinful and worldly inclinations. Do Thou keep my wayward heart, for I cannot keep it myself. With a feeling of total helplessness and weakness, I surrender myself into Thy hands. Oh, subdue every selfish and rebellious thought within me. Give me a tender conscience, a fear of again going astray, an

ardent desire of doing and enduring Thy holy will, and enable me so to live to Thy glory here, that hereafter I may inherit Thy promises of eternal life, which Thou hast given me in Jesus Christ."

It is thus that the Spirit of God, through the severe discipline of sickness, suffering, disappointments, crosses, and trials, leads the soul to a realising sense of its waywardness and folly,—of its past sinful resisting of the will and purpose of God,—and of the necessity for an entire and complete surrender of the whole man, to His guidance,—His faithfulness and His care. It is thus that the believer is brought to learn, that it is in following the directing hand of God,—in resigning everything to His wise disposal,—in being ready to do or suffer anything He requires, that *true happiness* is to be enjoyed. And, oh, surely it may inspire gratitude and love, to know and be assured, that such will be the end accomplished, in *every* believer's experience. None will be *exempt* from the discipline,—none will *fail* to reap the benefit. To some, indeed, the ordeal may be less painful than to others, but all will be brought, in God's good time and way, to give their willing heart-

felt response to the petition, "Thy will be done."

"Leave to His sovereign sway
To choose and to command ;
So shalt thou wondering own, His way
How wise, how strong His hand !

"Far, far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When fully He the work hath wrought
That caused thy needless fear."

Bereaved mourner ! do *you* feel it a difficult thing, in the dark hour of sorrow, to say "Thy will be done" from the heart, and to bow in meek submission to the appointment of your heavenly Father ? Oh ! deem it not strange. It *is* hard and difficult to bid a last farewell to the loved—the cherished ;—hard to wander through scenes and places, where you were wont to hear the voice of affection and grasp the hand of true and tried friendship ;—hard to realise that never again on earth will you listen to accents which once fell so sweetly on the ear, or gaze upon that countenance which ever beamed with fond regard towards you. An

eminent servant of God, now at rest in heaven, thus describes the anguish he felt in the loss of a beloved son:—"I often find myself, when alone, literally crying out for him, and moved to stretch out my arms as if I could embrace him." And such, afflicted one, may be the anguish of *your* heart.

Still, be assured, the trying dispensation was *needful*. He, who loves you more tenderly than any earthly friend, sent it to draw your heart upwards to Himself,—sent it to lead you with child-like dependence to trust your *all* to Him,—for joy or sorrow,—for health or sickness,—for time or eternity. He desires by this affliction, to conform your will more and more to His,—to increase your love of holiness, and render you, in a higher degree, its possessor,—to strengthen your faith, inflame your love, animate your hope, and, in the end, confirm your joy. Think not that, because the gloom of death surrounds you,—because your heart is now lacerated and bleeding,—the love, the tenderness of your heavenly Father is withdrawn. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," is the Divine assurance;—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Indulge no dark, despond-

ing thoughts. Imagine not, that because the clouds have gathered round you, the sky will never again be clear, or that the sun will never again shine upon your pathway;—"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that truly love Him." In this your night of grief, He says to you, as to all His children—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant, though he walk in darkness, and have no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." He will enable you to say as David does, immediately after a season of despondency,—"The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning all the day? Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Oh, do not resist or struggle against your heavenly Father, but strive to yield yourself meekly and humbly to His will,—hear the rod and Him who appointed it,—pray that He would

hallow your trial—whatever it may be;—that He would give you grace, patiently and contentedly to bear what He has laid upon you,—so that, day by day, you may receive the impress of the likeness of the ever-blessed Saviour, and become meet for the heavenly inheritance.

Reflect, too, that *submission* is pleasing in your heavenly Father's sight. The sooner you acquire the spirit of a child, the sooner will the cross, the trial, the suffering, be both sanctified and removed. Not that you are to try to bear with patience, *in order* to be freed from chastisement, but because you will be doing "that which is pleasing to Him;" and when you do, He will enable you to "rejoice with exceeding joy." He knows the weight and duration of your sorrows and trials. He sees the end from the beginning, and the happy issue out of all your afflictions which He has in store for you. Trust Him implicitly;—submit to Him cheerfully, and you will find that all shall yet be well,—that more grace will be given you,—that the heavier the trial the larger will be the measure of strength. No sorrow has been mingled in your cup—no thorn has been scattered on your path—no grief has oppressed your spirit, but what

“is common to the whole family of God.” The Shepherd is leading you by a circuitous path, but in the right way, to His own blessed fold. Leave all to Him—to His faithfulness, His love, His power, His watchful, sleepless care. Let your song be—

“ He led me through the wilderness,
A long and lonely way ;
He soothed me with His tenderness,
And fed me day by day.
Oh, better far the wilderness
And desert way to me,
If, wandering in its loneliness,
I should be nearer Thee !”

As you advance, still trying more and more to submit to your Father's will,—in every fresh trouble imploring fresh grace,—in every onset of the evil heart to resist God's pleasure, crying to Him for help, your prayer will be answered. “Mercies you do not dream of now will be strewn around your footsteps. Powers which till now have lain as sleeping shadows within you, will awake to life,—powers of faith, of hope, of love, and of that perfect patience and submission

which will enable you to lift your streaming eyes to heaven, and say, "Lord I am Thine; do with me what Thou wilt,—send me what Thou pleasest; only do Thou abide with me." Then let the shades of evening fall,—let your path be dark and desolate,—let your burden be heavy, your cross painful,—in the surrounding stillness you will hear voices cheering you onward, voices from the everlasting hills, and the sound as of the waving of angels' wings around you.

"One, too, mightier than the angels, will make His presence felt; and as you place your trembling hand in His, and cry, 'Lord, guide me, for I cannot see,' there will descend a stream of light upon your darkening path, and peace so perfect, that, with songs of praise and thanksgiving, you will pursue your way, willing to wait, willing to endure, willing to do all things and to suffer all things, for His dear sake, who is leading you through the valley of the shadow of death, to the fountains of living waters, to the land of everlasting joy."

O Thou who art the God of patience and consolation, strengthen me in the inner man, that

I may bear the yoke and burden of the Lord without murmuring. May I heartily love Thee, entirely confide in Thee, and absolutely resign both soul and body to Thy wise disposal. Lord, I am sensible that I am far from exercising that unreserved submission to Thy will which I ought to exercise. Help me, I beseech Thee, so to trust in Thy infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, that I may be able to say, from my very heart, "Thy will be done." Oh, teach me to be grateful for the manifold comforts allotted me; and support me graciously, that my soul be not cast down and disquieted within me. Assist me to cherish penitent, believing, and serious thoughts and affections, and such meekness and patience as my Divine Master manifested while He was a sufferer on earth. Give me a deep sense of my sinfulness, that I may ever be humbled before Thee, and may feel Thy great mercy and forbearance towards me.

Grant that all Thy dispensations may be sanctified by Thy Holy Spirit, and be instrumental in preparing me for that happy state where peace, and purity, and love are perfected,—where there is no more sin, no strife, no sorrow,—where the former things are passed away,

and Thou makest all things new. Hear, gracious Lord, accept, and answer, and bless Thy servant, for Jesus Christ's sake.—AMEN

REST.

It was Thy will, my Father,
That laid Thy servant low ;
It was Thy hand, my Father,
That dealt the chastening blow ;
It was Thy mercy bade me rest
My weary soul awhile ;
And every blessing I receive,
Reflects Thy gracious smile.

It is Thy care, my Father,
That cherishes me now ;
It is Thy peace, my Father,
That rests upon my brow ;
It is Thy truth, Thy truth alone,
That gives my spirit rest,
And soothes me like a happy child
Upon its mother's breast.

I have known youth, my Father,
 Bright as a summer's day,
 And earthly love, my Father ;
 But that too pass'd away.
 Now life's small taper faintly burns—
 A little flickering flame,
 But Thine eternal love remains
 Unchangeably the same.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS

SUBMISSION.

Do with me what Thou wilt,
 Submissively and still
 I will lie passive in Thy hands ;
 Do Thou Thy holy will.
 'Tis Thine to choose : my portion let it be
 To acquiesce with deep humility.

Imbue my soul with light ;
 My spirit unto Thine
 Unite, and let me thus receive
 Thy Spirit into mine ;
 Absorb'd in close communion, let me feel
 The peace of God into my bosom steal.

Thou art the Sanctuary
Of the regenerate ;
The Hope, the Comforter, the Strength,
Of the disconsolate.
Enshrined within Thy presence, let me see
Thee only, and forget my misery.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

*"Hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place : and when Thou
hearest, forgive."*—1 KINGS viii. 30.

And wilt Thou hear my soul's complaint,
And wilt Thou soothe its fears,
Support it, Lord, when weak and faint,
And dry these falling tears ?
Wilt Thou forget to sin how prone
Its wandering wishes be,
And this remember, Lord, alone—
That it was bought by Thee ?

And wilt Thou bear with every doubt,
And pardon every sin,
Subdue each fighting from without,
Forgive each fear within ?

I know Thou wilt ; for thus Thy grace,
Though oft provoked it be,
Reflected from my Saviour's face,
Shines brightest upon me.

J. S. B. MONSELL

VI.

“Thou art my God.”

PSALM lxi. 8.

“My soul followeth hard after Thee.”

AND it is the desire of our heavenly Father that it should. To this He brings *all* His dear children by *one way or other*, that they “follow hard after Him.” Sometimes He visits them with sore chastisement, and then, with tear-dimmed eyes and bleeding hearts, they cry to Him for mercy, and He wipes their tears away, and gently binds up their wounds, so that they love Him more than ever, and “follow after Him.” Sometimes He permits a dark cloud to overshadow them,—they become timid and fearful,—they cannot realise His presence; and faith, hope, and love begin to languish. Then do they lift up their hearts, exclaiming, “Lord, send help. Oh, give light, comfort, security!” and soon a friendly hand is outstretched, and a loving voice whispers, “Fear not! I am with thee still;” and with a firm, unfaltering step they “follow after Him.” Sometimes they become surrounded with difficulties and dangers,

—every step of their pathway is trodden with pain; they look around, but can discover no way of escape, till, in answer to the urgent prayer, "Lord, help me," they are conducted to a quiet resting-spot, and then, permitted by their heavenly Guide to enter an easier path, "they follow hard after Him." Or, it may be that weary months are appointed them,—months of sickness and pain, when prayer seems unheard, longing desire unheeded, and the most urgent entreaties appear utterly unavailing. The disease may even take such deep root that the appalling thought comes home, "It is life-long." Death itself would almost be regarded as a relief, but it comes not. No; the discipline is needed, severe though it be;—the child will not be forsaken, for an Eye of love rests upon it;—the heart will not *utterly* fail, for One will yet strengthen it on the bed of languishing;—the soul will not perish, for the Refiner is even now purifying it from its dross. Let "patience have her perfect work," and then mark the change. Where all was fretfulness, impatience, despondency, there is now submission, calmness, hope. And why? Because the Comforter has come. He has revealed the truth, that pardon

is more precious than health,—God’s love more precious than any earthly good,—salvation more precious than years of unalloyed worldly happiness and unbroken health. Who shall wonder, that the soul thus comforted should desire “to *abide* under the shadow of the Almighty,”—to have Him ever near,—to bask in the sunshine of His favour,—to hold fast by the everlasting Arm; and knowing, from bitter experience, how impossible it is to tread life’s stormy path without such a companion,—how soon the heart would fail, and doubt arise, and temptation beset, and despondency return,—that this should be its language, “O Lord, my soul followeth hard after Thee!”

Reader, what is *your* state? Are you, under the chastening hand of God, pleading hard that He would send relief? Do you know what it is to groan underneath a burden which seems too heavy for you to bear? Oh, be comforted! Turn the eye of faith heavenward, and, if the burden be not removed, you will be abundantly strengthened to carry it. Still pray on; the Lord’s time is coming. Believe it, Christian, your trial has been sent in tenderest love. God has appointed it not only to bring you to *believe*

in His love, but also to a *growing enjoyment* of it, that you may long ardently for its possession and “follow hard after Him.” It is when we are robbed of some earthly comfort,—when we are stripped of some valued possession,—when we are summoned to the painful endurance of some heavy trial, that we come to realise how powerless we are to retain anything when it pleases God to command its removal. Then is it, too, that under the teaching of the Holy Spirit we learn, how good and gracious have been the dealings of our heavenly Father, in permitting us so long to enjoy blessings for which we were not truly thankful. We are led to realise, that He has taken them from us, only in order to prove that He loves us still,—in order to confer upon us other and far more precious blessings. What, although days of sickness are appointed, if we are enabled at such times to draw nearer to our heavenly Father, and are permitted to repose on His bosom of Infinite Love! What, although the storms of adversity beat upon us, if we are driven to the shelter of the Rock of Ages! What, although bereavement and sorrow have weighed down our hearts, if we are led thereby to pour out all our

griefs and cares, to Him who can heal and comfort the wounded spirit ! Drawn thus to our God and Saviour, we will find the suffering-time a blessed time,—we will “rejoice in tribulation,” because we are made conscious of a nearness to the heart of our heavenly Father, unknown to us, while yet unvisited by trial and distant from the cross.

The Saviour becomes more precious to the soul, for we have felt His strengthening Arm sustaining us,—we have heard His tender accents soothing us, and we have communed with Him in spirit, and been refreshed and comforted. Treading the path of suffering, we have had the presence and sympathy of One who Himself deeply sorrowed,—One who is therefore well-fitted to impart consolation,—who knows every fear and anxiety—every trouble and calamity which can fall to the lot of His disciples. Oh, when such has been the experience of the tried and suffering believer,—when, despite days, and nights, and months, and years of pain and distress and sorrow, he has had an *ever-growing* enjoyment of Divine love and faithfulness, may he not regard his suffering-time as a precious one, and, yearning for more and more intimate

communion with his God and Saviour, still cry from the depths of a grateful heart, "my soul followeth hard after Thee?"

"Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen ;

A glorious Sun, that wanes not nor declines:
Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines:
All may depart ; I fret not, nor repine,
While I my Saviour's am, while He is mine.

"He stays me falling, lifts me up when down,
Reclaims me wandering, guards from every foe ;

Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown ;
Which, in return, before His feet I throw,
Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,
Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine."

But even when such *enjoyment* of Divine love has not as yet been realised,—when trouble and distress lie heavily on the Christian, and he seems ready to sink under the oppressive load, his only safety,—his only hope of realising, that God is still as ever to him a God of love, is in "following hard after Him,"—making known to

Him the grief which oppresses, the fear which perplexes, the sins which weigh heavily upon the soul. Where the contrite heart is found, God's eye expresses only love and pity, and His hand reaches out forgiveness,—His Spirit fills the heart with peace.

He *does* send affliction after affliction until His children are drawn in penitence and humility to His footstool,—but, when the eye of faith is raised to the cross of Calvary,—when the Saviour's blood is anew sprinkled upon the soul, there *is* rest, peace, comfort, hope, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Hear the words of an inspired writer,—“I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” And again,—“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”

Yes, this is the true,—the only way in which we can hope to find relief and comfort,—help and deliverance, in every hour of trial and

calamity. In Jesus we will have “peace,” though in the world we have “tribulation.”

Tried Christian! be assured, it is your wisdom, if you are suffering from anxiety, difficulty, or trial, to go immediately on your bended knees to God, and acknowledge that all the trouble that makes you anxious and distresses you, comes from Him, and brings you to Him;—and that you submit to Him,—that you accept the chastisement which, as a loving Father, He has sent, and earnestly pray for grace to profit by the visitation. Let this be the language of your soul—

“ The cross my Master bore for me, for Him
I fain would bear,
But mortal strength to weakness turns, and
courage to despair !
Then mercy to my failings, Lord, my sinking
faith renew,
And when Thy sorrows visit me, oh, send Thy
patience too ! ”

Cling ever to the assurance that He loves thee,—that thou art one for whom the Saviour offered up His last prayer, and sealed it with

His precious blood ! Oh, if God has so loved thee as to give His own Son for thee, how shall He not with Him also freely give thee all things ! Banish, then, from thy mind all hard and suspicious thoughts, and beware lest, through thine unbelief, affliction, which should make thee “ follow hard after God,” lead thee farther and farther away from Him. Whatever be thy cross,—thy trouble,—thy sorrow, oh, bring it to the mercy-seat, and thy Saviour will make intercession for thee. Place all your confidence in Him, who is the Redeemer, the Elder Brother, the High Priest and Mediator,—and who is, even now, pleading for thee within the vail.

Who so well fitted as *He* to sympathise with, and to strengthen you ? He has sorrowed Himself,—groaned beneath the pressure of an anguish in which there was none to share, and drained the very dregs of the cup of sorrow. Make known to Him your desire. You are unworthy to ask anything in your own name ; ask humbly, yet confidently, in *His*. The Father may reject *you*,—His own Son He will not. Your sins may cry aloud for punishment,—the blood of the slain Lamb will plead louder for mercy. You have no merit to entitle you to

ask anything, but the Victim of the great atoning sacrifice is still before the throne. You may dread to enter the holy of holies,—the great High Priest, still and for ever, presents the merits of His all-perfect sacrifice.

“Burden’d with guilt, wouldst thou be blest?
Trust not the world, it gives no rest;
Christ brings relief to hearts oppress’d;
O weary sinner, come!

“Come, leave thy burden at the cross;
Count all thy gains but worthless dross;
His grace o’er pays all earthly loss;
O needy sinner, come!

“Come hither! bring thy boding fears,
Thy aching heart, thy bursting tears;
’Tis Mercy’s voice salutes thine ears;
O trembling sinner, come!”

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I bow down before Thee to bless Thee for all Thy mercies, and especially for not having dealt with me according to my many sins. Pardon, I beseech Thee, for Thy Son Jesus Christ’s sake, all the offences of my past life, and enable me to believe in Him to the salvation of my soul. In-

crease my longing after conformity to my Divine Redeemer, and may the remembrance of His marvellous love, and grace, and mercy incline my heart to “follow hard after Him.” Blessed Jesus! Thy followers and people have the assurance of Thine own gracious declaration, that whatsoever they shall ask in Thy name, they will receive it. O Saviour of the world! I humbly ask of Thee more love, more grace, more faith and trust in Thee. Help me to cling to Thee. In the darkest hour may I realise Thy presence; in the time of greatest danger may I hear Thy voice; and when my faith begins to fail, oh let Thy strengthening arm uphold me. Remember, O Lord, the word unto Thy servant in which Thou hast caused me to hope, and answer me according to the multitude of Thy mercies.—AMEN.

“*My soul followeth hard after Thee.*”—PSALM lxxiii. 8.

Give me, O Lord, whate’er my lot may be,
A heart to look to, and to lean on Thee;
Teach me the thing that pleaseth Thee to do,
And make my life to my profession true.

Let me, my Saviour, on Thy breast recline,
Thy words my comfort, my devotion Thine ;
My life's best joy Thy promises to prove,
Trust in Thy truth, and triumph in Thy love.

J. S. B. M.

“*Walk in love.*”—EPH. v. 2.

Lord, give me grace that I may be
Thine, with such soul-sincerity,
That wheresoe'er my steps may move,
My first, last thought may be Thy love.

Lord, let my morn and evening prayer
Be in Thy strength, and for Thy care ;
That neither day nor night be past,
So as to grieve me at the last.

But while I watch and pray, lest sin
Surprise my soul and enter in,
To rob me of my present joy,
And all my hopes of heaven destroy—

Let my first fear be, lest I grieve
The grace that taught me to believe ;
Let my last care be, not to prove
Ungrateful for Thy saving love.

J. S. B. M.

God ! Thou art my rock of strength,
And my home is in Thine arms ;
Thou wilt send me help at length,
And I feel no wild alarms.
Sin nor death can pierce the shield
Thy defence has o'er me thrown ;
Up to Thee myself I yield,
And my sorrows are Thine own.

Thou my shelter from the blast,
Thou my strong defence art ever ;
Though my sorrows thicken fast,
Yet I know Thou leav'st me never.
When my foe puts forth his might,
And would tread me in the dust,
To this rock I take my flight,
And I conquer him through trust.

When my trials tarry long,
Unto Thee I look and wait,
Knowing none, though keen and strong,
Can my faith in Thee abate.
And this faith I long have nurst,
Comes alone, O God, from Thee ;
Thou my heart didst open first,
Thou didst set this hope in me.

Christians, cast on Him your load,
To your tower of refuge fly ;
Know He is the living God,
Ever to His creatures nigh.
Seek His ever open door
In your hours of utmost need ;
All your hearts before Him pour,
He will send you help with speed.

Yea, on Thee, my God, I rest,
Letting life float calmly on,
For I know the last is best,
When the crown of joy is won.
In Thy might all things I bear,
In Thy love find bitters sweet ;
And, with all my grief and care,
Sit in patience at Thy feet.

LYRA GERMANICA.

VII.

The Remembrancer.

JOB xiii. 26.

“Thou writest bitter things against me.”

SICKNESS is often a painful remembrancer. The past, which seemed forgotten, comes back with its train of omissions and commissions, promises and vows, which never were fulfilled—privileges and warnings which passed by unimproved—and solemn knockings at the chamber of the soul which made only a slight and momentary impression. Have we never realised this? Have not our hearts trembled at the revived record of other days? But oh, what is *our* recollection when compared with the omniscience of God! He has seen and recorded thoughts and words and deeds from our very childhood. To Him all hearts are open, and from Him no secrets are hid. He has watched our every movement, and there has not been within us a secret purpose, a sinful desire, an unholy thought, which has escaped His notice. How often has He warned us when we were treading the path of sin,—warned us by His providence, and by His grace,—warned us by His word and ministers,

—warned us by blighted hopes and shattered plans,—warned us by threatening to snap asunder the frail cord of life, and terminate for ever the possibility of a return to Him ! Well may our hearts fail us when we consider what “ bitter things ” God has written against us. “ When I called ye did not answer.”—“ They would none of my counsel ; they despised all my reproof.”—“ They hearkened not, but hardened their neck.”—“ Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Oh, how often these “ bitter things ” have been written against us ! And every year has added to their number and aggravation, for every year we owed it to the mercy and forbearance of God, that He did not cut us off in the midst of our sins. Blessed be God, dark as the record has been,—stained with the blackest ingratitude, and foul and polluted as it must have appeared to “ Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” we are not abandoned to despair ! No, there is hope—hope in the crucified Saviour, hope in His precious blood, hope in His all-sufficient atonement, hope in His all-prevailing intercession. Lamb of God ! we would turn to Thee ! By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death

and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, we do beseech Thee have mercy upon us!

“Is there forgiveness in our Father’s home?
Are penitential tears regarded there?
Will Jesus ever say, Thy lost ones come
To seek Thy pardon and Thy home to share?
“Father, I know that Thy forgiving love
Hails with delight a contrite sinner’s tear:
And Thou wilt welcome to Thy home above
A child to whom the Saviour’s name is dear.”

Yes, fellow-sufferers, let our ground of hope be in Christ, the Daysman between God and us,—the Mediator who for our sakes was nailed to the accursed tree,—the mighty Intercessor who pleads for us at the Father’s right hand. “Bitter things” have been written against us, and we have no words,—no merits of our own to plead; we are “poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked:”

“Nothing in our hands we bring,
Simply to the Cross we cling.”

But there we cannot perish. Deep as is the mountain of our guilt, deeper, far deeper is that ocean of infinite love in which God has promised

to bury it for ever, and to remember it no more against us. Oh mercy unspeakable ! These “bitter things” let us mourn over :—let us cherish at their recollection that “godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of ;”—let us grieve because we ever sinned against a God so gracious, merciful, and compassionate,—against a Saviour so loving, tender, and sympathising,—against a Holy Spirit so patient, and gentle, and forbearing. Let us pray for grace to serve our God with more fidelity,—that in everything we may seek to please Him,—that our inmost hearts may be given up to Him,—and that we may present “our bodies and spirits as living sacrifices unto Him, which is our reasonable service.”

And, in our present season of sickness and suffering, let us resolve to take cheerfully whatever God may see meet to appoint. Pain, and distress, and sorrow, are what we have justly merited, but “the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” He may have compassion upon us, and send relief. Having cast all our care on Him, let us believe that He careth for us,—that He has, and can have, no other object in His dealings towards us, but simply and solely that

of making us holy and happy for ever. Not that pain and sorrow have of themselves the power to make us so; they naturally irritate and vex the spirit; but, by God's blessing, suffering is made the means of carrying on His cure within us. Under the leading of His grace, affliction draws us to Him who alone can renew and sanctify the heart;—it brings us to Him who is the true and only Purifier,—who will remove from us the pollution of sin,—who will anew sprinkle on our souls the precious blood of Christ,—who will bend our wills to the will of God, so that we shall love what He loves, and choose what He chooses, and willingly, patiently resign ourselves to Him, ready to do, or suffer anything that He requires us. Then let us humbly and earnestly wait for Him,—let us seek, by prayer, the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and cling to the cross of Jesus as the foundation of our hope. Let us seek to realise the loving-kindness of our heavenly Father in so “caring” for us, and let us not desire to escape any trials or afflictions He may see meet to send, lest we should thereby be only escaping one great and necessary means of preparing us for future blessedness.

Although memory may have written “bitter things” against us,—although we have too much reason to abase ourselves in the sight of God, because of the weakness of our faith,—the coldness of our love,—our want of zeal in His service,—our neglect of, and our lukewarmness in religious duty,—although “we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done,” yet, blessed be God, we are not left without comfort and hope. Though in ourselves we have neither strength, nor life, nor hope, we have all these in the free mercies of God, through His Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer. We are invited to come with our guilt and misery to the foot of the cross,—there to be sprinkled with atoning blood,—there to receive the assurance of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace,—there to obtain that rest, that peace, that comfort, which are in vain sought after in a weary and disappointing world. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” “He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “He was made sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made

the righteousness of God in Him." Our sin was laid upon Him, and undertaken by Him. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

Oh! then, whilst cast down by the remembrance of the "bitter things" recorded against us, let us earnestly plead the atoning blood of Christ, and strive to exercise a believing confidence in the all-sufficiency of our dear Redeemer. Let us have a simple, heartfelt reliance on the Word of God, and believe that these gracious assurances are verily addressed to us:—"Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Let us pray for forgiveness, believing that what we ask we shall assuredly receive. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

This,—this is the only true foundation of peace of soul and content of mind,—that our

peace is made with God, by Jesus Christ His only Son, who has taken our sins upon Himself, and borne the punishment of them, and who, as a free, unmerited gift, has given us His righteousness, by which we are made righteous before God, and are “accepted in the Beloved.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes, God made us to find our happiness in His faith, His love, His fear. In *that* we can be happy, (and we are led to it only by the cross of Christ,) but out of that, happiness can never be ours. We may have mirth,—we may have gladness,—we may have transient joy; but abiding peace, unchanging happiness, that fears no vicissitude of earth, or disclosure of eternity, we cannot possess. “Bitter things” will be recorded against us,—which will rouse conscience from its dream of security, and fill us with dread and alarm.

But, if we have made Christ the portion of our

souls,—if we have looked unto Him by faith, as “the Lamb of God which taketh away” *our* sins, and the sins of all who believe in His name, then is the promise given to us, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” The “bitter things” recorded against us are blotted out from the Book of God’s Remembrance,—and, although there can never be forgetfulness on the part of God,—although His memory retains every sin which we have committed, surer and firmer than if all our sins were written on leaves of brass,—yet in gracious condescension, He *speaks* after the manner of men, and says, that He will “*blot* them out,”—that He will “not *remember*” them.

Oh, surely, such love—such marvellous grace and mercy, may well assure us, that “He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to the death for us, will with Him also freely give us all things;”—that He loves us too tenderly to send anything that would really harm us. Tried one! take comfort from this thought, and believe that your troubles and sorrows,—painful though they must be,—are sent in tenderest love. You are “chastened of the Lord. that

you may not be condemned with the world." It is He who changes the bloom of health into the languor of disease ;—it is He who strews the path with thorns,—interrupts your comforts and enjoyments,—deprives you of those whom you love, and fills your home with mourning, lamentation, and woe. But, He does so for the wisest reasons. He sees that such painful discipline is "needed." He desires to make you a "partaker of His holiness." He would have you "conformed to the image of His Son." He is rendering you "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Receive, then, your trials meekly from your Father's gracious hand, and pray that by them He would work out His own blessed purpose in you, and, at last, bring you safely home to Himself. Trust ever in His love. He knows every throb of thy brow,—each hardly-drawn breath,—each beating of the fevered pulse,—each sinking of the aching head, and He says to you—

"Take thou thy cross, my son ; nor mayst thou choose ;

The cross I give is best ; do not refuse.

Renounce thy will ; seek nothing of thine own ;

Follow thou Me ; thou canst not walk alone."

Heavenly Father, give me grace at all times to trust Thy love, and to receive thankfully what Thou sendest. Lord, I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies. I have sinned, and done very wickedly. My transgressions are more than can be numbered, and the remembrance of them is very grievous to me. But Thou, O God, art rich in mercy. For the sake of Thy dear Son, my Saviour Jesus Christ, do Thou forgive mine iniquities, and remember them no more against me for ever. Oh, increase my love of holiness! Let the mind that was in Christ be also in me. Transform me by Thy Holy Spirit into His blessed image, so that I may love what Thou lovest, and choose what Thou choosest, and make it my meat and drink to do Thy holy will. Grant that I may ever bear with patience the discipline I am called to undergo, assured that Thou wilt not leave me nor forsake me, and that all things will be ordered for my happiness and wellbeing throughout eternity.

Give me grace, O God, to glorify Thee in time, that I may enjoy Thee for evermore. And all I ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ my Saviour.—AMEN.

O Saviour ! let my wearied spirit rest
Beneath the shadow of Thy cross, and send
Sweet thoughts of peace to soothe my troubled
breast,
And o'er my soul their dove-like wings extend.

Where shall I cast the burden of my life,
The burden of my sins, if not on Thee ?
My soul is grieved and wearied with the strife
Of this rude world ; receive and comfort me.

Beneath the shadow of the cross, Thy child
Shall find a refuge and a calm retreat,
Where sainted souls, with Heaven reconciled,
Await the hour when earth and heaven meet.
J. E. B.

HOLY TEARS.

Yes, thou mayst weep, for Jesus shed
Such tears as those thou sheddest now,
When, for the living or the dead,
Sorrow lay heavy on His brow.

He sees thee weep, yet doth not blame
The weakness of thy flesh and heart ;

Thy human nature is the same
As that in which He took a part.

He knows its weakness, for He felt
The crushing power of pain and woe ;
How body, soul, and spirit melt,
And faint beneath the stunning blow.

What if poor sinners count thy grief
The sign of an unchasten'd will ?
He who can give thy soul relief,
Knows that thou art submissive still.

Turn thee to Him, to Him alone ;
For all that our poor lips can say
To soothe thee, broken-hearted one,
Would fail to comfort thee to-day.

We will not speak to thee, but sit
In prayerful silence by thy side ;
Grief has its ebbs and flows ; 'tis fit
Our love should wait the ebbing tide.

Jesus himself will comfort thee
In His own time, in His own way ;
And haply more than "two or three"
Unite in prayer for thee to-day.

J. E.

Blessed Saviour, wilt Thou now
From Thy throne of glory bow ?
Wilt Thou from Thy starry sphere
Sinners' sorrow stoop to hear ?
Wilt Thou wash them in the blood
Of the suffering Lamb of God ?

By Thy cross and passion save us ;
By the hope those sufferings gave us ;
By Thine agony and sweat ;
By Thy prayers on Olivet ;
By Thy sighs and by Thy tears ;
By Thy people's hopes and fears ;
By the peace vouchsafed to Thee
When in dark Gethsemane !

By the sacramental tide
Gushing from Thy wounded side ;
By the load of others' sin,
That oppress'd Thy soul within ;
By the wondrous love Thou bore us,
That by death Thou shouldst restore us ;—
By that mercy and that love,
Hear us, Lord, in heaven above !

In the midnight of our sadness,
In the noontide of our gladness ;

Through each changing scene of life,
Calm and sunshine, storm and strife ;
At the last dread parting hour,
In Thy judgment's might and power—

Lord, deliver and defend us ;
Let Thy Spirit still attend us ;
Be Thy smile our beacon star,
Glimmering through the gloom afar,
Here,—the surety Thou art nigh,
There,—the blest reality !

PARISH MUSINGS.

VIII.

Dot Forsaken.

MATT. xiv. 23, 24.

“ When the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.”

THE narrative of which these words form a part has often been a source of great comfort to the tried and suffering believer. Every little incident is of priceless value, as it brings more and more fully home to the heart, the tender sympathy of Jesus, His sleepless care, His ready help, His almighty power. We are told that, at the close of a busy and anxious day, when our Lord had miraculously fed five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes,—when the people, astonished at His power, had resolved to make Him their King,—He “ constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side” of the sea of Galilee, whilst He Himself retired to a mountain,—there for a short season to enjoy the communion of His heavenly Father. Suddenly a violent tempest arose. The terrified disciples plied their

oars, but in vain. Their little bark was "in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves," the plaything of the storm, and "the wind was contrary." Darkness gathered round them, and, worse than all, they were *alone*; for "Jesus had not come unto them."

What a striking representation of the believer still! How often has he to encounter, and that, too, at his Master's bidding, the stormy gales of trouble? The ocean of life, how suddenly is it lashed into fury, and despite all our efforts, our feeble bark is driven to and fro! It has been thus with Christ's disciples in every age! While they have the promise of deliverance out of peril,—they have no promise that they will be exempted from encountering it. "The same afflictions have been accomplished in the brethren" since time began. They who have now entered the peaceful haven, where no adverse winds can rage,—*all* toiled, amid similar billows, on life's stormy sea. The vessel was saved from shipwreck,—but, not saved from being tempest-tossed. Amid the countless throng of the redeemed there is not *one*, of whom it may not be said, he came "out of great tribulation." It is the history of *all* the

saints in glory,—the earthly experience of all those ransomed ones who “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Think of their painful trials,—their grievous losses,—their bitter disappointments,—their perplexing cares,—their fearful mockings and scourgings,—their buffetings and imprisonments and deaths,—as they are recorded for our instruction in the Word of God! Think, too, of the furious storms which He had to encounter, who “was made like to His brethren,”—who “was in all points tempted like as we are.” What a dread night,—what a fearful tempest was that in which He was constrained in the bitterness of His anguished soul to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

While the trembling disciples were thus striving to cross the lake,—opposed by an adverse wind and a boisterous sea, the Saviour was praying alone on the mountain. He had not, however, forgotten them. Although personally withdrawn, His eye followed them in the gloom of night, and amid the furious waves. He saw the danger which threatened,—He knew the fears which then perplexed the hearts of His followers. And even so, tempest-tossed be-

liever, His all-seeing eye rests upon *thee*. As, on that lone mountain-height, He watched the storm-driven disciples on the sea of Galilee, so now in the heights of glory, the Saviour still watches over His people. He knows every danger which threatens them,—every difficulty, trial and temptation, which fills their hearts with terror and alarm. He is not unmindful of them. He has not forgotten them. Though the season of succour be deferred, it is delayed only for the fuller exhibition of Divine faithfulness, and love, and power. When His time has come, (and it is ever the best time,) He will appear for their help and deliverance. He *fore-saw* the toil and danger of His disciples on the sea of Galilee. He purposely sent them away, that they might encounter the fury of the storm. He who could have prevented their sufferings by His power, permitted them in His wisdom;—that He might show them how little they could do of themselves;—that He might exercise their faith and patience, and that He might glorify His mercy in their deliverance. Even so, Christian, He *permits thy sorrows*. Every night of pain and sickness,—every wave of trouble that rolls over thee, comes at His com-

mand. He knows that they are necessary. He permits them in tenderest love, and He has told thee to expect them. "In the world, ye shall have tribulation." In common with all Christ's followers, you must drink of the bitter cup of adversity, and be tried—perhaps sorely tried—in the furnace of affliction, for

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

And, this night of storm and tempest, to which the believer is exposed, may often be a long and dreary one,—so long, that it is the fourth watch ere deliverance is vouchsafed. Troubles and calamities may surround him on every side, and the Saviour's presence be, for a season, withdrawn. How did all things seem to conspire against the fearful disciples! The night was sullen and dark,—their Master was absent,—the sea was boisterous,—the winds were high and contrary. Had their Master been with them, however wildly the elements might rage, they would have felt secure;—had their Master been absent, still if the sea had been quiet or the wind favourable, the passage might have been endured;—now, both season, and sea and

wind, and their Master's desertion, combined to render them miserable. And thus it sometimes happens, through the overruling providence of God, that no glimpse of comfort shall appear, through the long, dark night, to gladden the trembling heart;—dangers and distress are all around;—the weary, toilworn disciple is beaten back by opposing doubts and fears;—and eagerly as he looks out through the surrounding gloom, no ray of comfort darts across it—all is thick, impenetrable darkness. Oh, how often do our hearts then fail us, and we begin to cry, “Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me? why do these storms beat upon me? wherefore dost Thou not hearken to my cry and come to my help?”

“Hearken to thy cry,” O child of God! He has heard it *already*. Yes, amid the songs of angels and the anthems of adoring hosts, thy feeble voice has reached the courts of heaven. He who loves thee with more than a brother's love *is* even now watching *thee*,—noting thy sorrows, caring for thy griefs, sympathising in all thy pains and sufferings.

He *will* assuredly “come to thy help.” He delays for the wisest and best reasons. His

present intercession has gained much for thee. It has enabled you to struggle on *till now*;—it has given you strength to resist despair;—it has kept you praying, wrestling, entreating;—and soon it will accomplish more, far more. Take it as the pledge that Jesus loves you, when, though the storm has continued to rage, and the calm has been delayed, the waves have not been allowed to overwhelm you. His time is the best time. Yet a little while, and the hour of deliverance will arrive. Yet a little while, and you will have rest, and peace, and quiet. You will find that it was good for you to have been afflicted,—that your faith was strengthened by trial,—that your progress heavenward, instead of being retarded, was hastened by the storm,—that the winds you dreaded, were wafting you onward in your voyage, and that the waves which seemed to threaten you with death, were bearing you to the haven of eternal calm.

Oh, then, whatever be your present state,—whatever the cares, and troubles, and griefs which burden your spirit,—whatever the darkness which has been permitted to enwrap you, strive ever to feel, that He who has, for a season, seemed to leave you all alone on a stormy sea,—He who

has spoken to the tempest, and allowed the waves to rear their foaming crests, is even now pleading for you on the mount,—even now watching you, till the hour arrive when He shall say, “Peace, be still;” and drawing near to you, shall whisper these consoling words, “It is I; be not afraid.”

Be this your earnest prayer to Jesus:—

“Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hopes on Thee;
Thy constant love, Thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

“Though tempest-tost, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter’d bark again.”

Heavenly Father, give me grace to trust in Thee at all times. Thou knowest what is best for Thy sinful creatures, and in Thy wisdom designest good to them by affliction. Teach me to acknowledge the mercy of Thy dispensations, and the advantages of a bed of sickness. Make me to rejoice in the means which Thou hast employed for strengthening my faith, increasing

my love of prayer, and bringing me to a sense of my own utter helplessness. Oh, grant that in the midst of my distress I may be able to feel assured that my Saviour is interceding for me, and that in His own good time He will appear for my help and deliverance. Suffer me not to give way to fear and despondency, or to fall into despair. Give me patience under my sufferings, and a hearty resignation to Thy will. Mercifully hear me, O my Father, and give me that peace which Thou hast promised to those whose hearts are set on Thee; for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was once a man of sorrows, and is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities; to whom, as our merciful High Priest, be glory for ever.—AMEN.

Though strange and winding seem the way

While yet on earth I dwell,

In heaven my heart shall gladly say,

Thou, God, dost all things well!

Take courage, then, my soul, nor steep

Thy days and nights in tears;

Soon shalt thou cease to mourn and weep.

Though dark are now thy fears.

He comes, He comes, the strong to save,
He comes, nor tarries more ;
His light is breaking o'er the wave,
The clouds and storms are o'er.

LYRA GERMANICA.

Shades of coming woe surround us,
Springing up on every side ;
Spread Thy sheltering wings around us,
That in peace we may abide.

Darker now they gather o'er us,
Like the shadows of Thy rod,
Stretching down the path before us,
And we tremble, mighty God !

Suffer not our feet to stumble,
Suffer not our steps to slide ;
Keep us lowly, keep us humble,
And be Thou Thyself our guide.

J. E. B.

Show me the way, O Lord,
And make it plain ;
I would obey Thy word,
Speak yet again ;
I will not take one step until I know
Which way it is that Thou wouldst have
me go.

O Lord, I cannot see—
Vouchsafe me light ;
The mist bewilders me,
Impedes my sight ;
Hold Thou my hand, and lead me by Thy
side ;
I dare not go alone, be Thou my guide.

If I have lost my way,
Oh, set me right !
If going now astray,
Hold my hand tight ;
This labyrinth is intricate and long
Show me the right path, lest I choose the
wrong.

I cannot see Thy face,
Though Thou art near ;

When will the morning chase
 Away my fear ?
When shall I see the place where day and
 night
Exist not, for Thy glory is its light ?

I will be patient, Lord,
 Trustful and still ;
I will not doubt Thy word—
 My hopes fulfil.
How can I perish, clinging to Thy side,
My Comforter, my Saviour, and my Guide ?
J. E. B.

Why, my soul, so sad and fearful,
 Crossing Life's dark ocean tide ?
Why that upward eye so tearful ?
 Christ is sleeping by thy side !

Though the storm and tossing billow
 Seem the only presence near,
Christ is nearer, on a pillow
 Sleeping by thee—wherefore fear ?

Wakes the storm?—it is to try thee!
Sleeps the Christ?—'tis for thy sake!
Let the heart but feel Him nigh thee,
Lift thy voice, and He'll awake.

He'll awake, and wind and ocean
Soon shall bow before His will;
All thy weary heart's emotion
Hush'd before His "Peace, be still!"

IX.

Be not Afraid.

MATT. xiv. 26, 27.

“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

DURING a long and tempestuous night, the disciples had to struggle against the stormy billows. Doubtless they felt weary, oppressed, well-nigh hopeless; but, even then it was, that deliverance was vouchsafed. After having been driven all night long,—not so much by storms and waves, as by their own anxious, troubled thoughts,—in the fourth watch, (which was near to the morning,) Jesus came to them; and, so strange and unexpected was the sight, that instead of joy, their first emotion was terror;—“they cried out for fear:”—they did not recognise their Deliverer, but imagined that they saw a spirit. Yet, He had purposely delayed His coming, that He might exercise their patience,—that He might teach them to wait upon Divine Providence in cases of extremity,—that their devotions

might be more whetted by delay,—and that they might more gladly welcome their deliverance.

For the selfsame purpose Jesus often delays His coming to His disciples still. He permits sorrow upon sorrow to come upon them. He leaves them in pain, and sickness, and anguish till they are, as it were, in the depth of extremity. It is the *fourth* watch with them ; but the storm still rages, the darkness continues, and their Protector, their Friend, is not nigh. Oh, how often in such a dreary hour has Jesus come to His disciples,—come to them amid the gloom, walking in majesty upon the stormy wave,—come to them that He might say as of old on the sea of Galilee, “It is I ; be not afraid !”

Yes, Christian, could we ask those blessed ones who are now hymning His praises above, “When was it that the Saviour was felt most precious by you ?” oh, they would answer, “’Twas in the dreary night of our suffering, when we lay helpless, hopeless,—’twas in the hour of extremity, when there seemed no prospect of deliverance,—’twas in the hour of sore distress, when our hearts were torn with anguish, and our prayers had become intensely urgent, and we felt that if He did not help us, ‘vain

was the help of man,'—'twas even then that the blessed Jesus revealed Himself, calmed our fears, and bade us be of good cheer."

Or ask, if you will, that patient sufferer, at whose calmness you have often wondered, and whose language is ever that of child-like submission and acquiescence to the will of God,—ask the same question, and you will be told, "Never did I feel my Lord so dear,—never did I realise His love, His power, His grace, so fully as on my bed of languishing, when He came to me in the night-watches, and permitted me to unbosom myself to Him, and rest my weary head upon His breast. Oh, it was then He promised to be ever near me,—to strengthen me under suffering,—to give me patience to endure my Father's will,—and to make His 'grace sufficient' for me. I know that He sends me trial,—that He has commissioned this sickness,—that He mingles the cup which I have to drink, and I know also that these things are needed for my soul's welfare. Shall I not then welcome what is sent me in love, when I know and have the assurance that in every hour when my suffering is greatest, my pain most agonising, my trouble most grievous and bur-

densome, Jesus will come to my help,—come to encourage and strengthen me,—come to show me what He has suffered for my sake,—to tell me that the sorrows which oppress my soul weighed more heavily on His,—that the foes I have to battle with more fiercely assailed Him,—that I but *taste* the bitter cup, whilst He had to drain it,—that there fall on me only a few drops of the mighty tempest which spent its rage on Him,—and that, as He ‘learned obedience by the things He suffered,’ so His grace will enable me to do it also.” “Thus have God’s children found that suffering times were blessed times,—that they never had such nearness to their Father, such holy freedom with Him, and such heavenly comforts from Him, as under the cross; it only took away what checked the current of His love, His peace, His joy in their hearts. The cross, be it what it may,—pain, sickness, calamity, loss of friends, fortune, fame,—is the greatest blessing on this side heaven;—because by it the Father keeps the children in the closest communion that they have with Him on earth,—by it He purges them, makes them fruitful, and partakers of His holiness,—by it He crucifies the life of sense, deadens them to

the world, and mortifies their lusts and passions ; and by it, as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day." They receive new life, new strength, new comfort, new peace,—they become more and more conformed to the First-born among many brethren, both *in* suffering and *by* suffering,—they tread the steps of those who have "entered into rest," and come up "from the wilderness, leaning on the arm of the Beloved."

Christian, take comfort when you think of the mighty cloud of witnesses who would thus testify to your Saviour's constant care and unchanging love. Think on what He has already done for you. He groaned, bled, and died for you. "You were lost, but He found you,—an enemy, but He reconciled you,—a captive, but He freed you,—blind, but He cured you,—dead, but He quickened you." Oh ! when you reflect how He has watched over you since you have received the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus,—how He has preserved you from dangers, succoured you in seasons of temptation, supported you in times of trial, cherished you in days of sickness, comforted you in the hours of despondency,—you cannot surely imagine

that He will now desert you,—you cannot believe that He will so mar the work of His own hands—the labour of His own love—as to cast you off, and leave you to perish. “If He sought you when a stranger, will He not take care of you when a child? If the enemy was loved, how much more the friend? Will He refuse to answer the prayers He Himself has prompted,—to fulfil the hopes He Himself has inspired,—to honour the confidence He Himself has encouraged,—and to complete the work He Himself has begun?” Oh no! Learn to have more confidence in your Saviour,—more reliance upon Him who has said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,”—more dependence upon Him who poured out His precious blood to reconcile you to God.

Let your feeling ever be—

“Thou didst it, who art gone on high,
Where many mansions be,
There to prepare a glorious home,
And deathless friends for me.
Shall I rebel against the love
That fits me for my home above?”

Ah no ! e'en through this load of fears
My heart is springing up
To thank Thee for the boundless grace
That overflows my cup ! ”

Your suffering may now be great,—your days and nights may be full of anxiety and restlessness,—the star of hope may even be obscured by the mists of darkness which surround you ; yet, take courage ! You are meeting the storm which the Saviour himself has permitted to rage ; you are battling with elements which He can in a moment control ; you are passing through a night through which has already passed the Man of sorrows ; and soon He will come to you. That voice which never speaks in vain will command the storm to cease. Your best, your dearest Friend—the “ Consolation of Israel ”—will say to you, “ ‘ Be of good cheer ; ’ I know how thou hast borne and suffered during these weary hours. I know every trial through which you have passed, and which the world has never known—sorrows which could not, and ought not, to be communicated but to Me alone. I know your every prayer for guidance—your every effort to bear well and patiently what I

have laid upon you, and to profit by the visitation. ‘From the calm shores of the land of everlasting life have I watched thee, my trembling disciple, toiling through the waves of this troublesome world ; and now I have come to thee upon the billows, that I may be near thee in the time of extremest peril ; and, behold, I am with thee in the ship ! Fear not ; they who follow Me shall never walk in darkness ; thy footsteps shall not slip ; mercy shall hold thee up when dangers encompass thee about ; and though the sunshine of this world’s joys be dim for thee, in My light shalt thou see light.’”

“ Oh thou who mournest on thy way,
With longings for the close of day,
He walks with thee, that Saviour kind,
And gently whispers, ‘ Be resign’d ;
Bear up—bear on—the end shall tell
Thy Lord doth order all things well.’”

Oh, then, afflicted one, be not cast down, neither be dismayed. Faint not under your sorrows ; but strive to wear out your three watches of tribulation with undaunted patience and holy resolution. Let songs of praise arise

from the ark in which you are securely borne along amidst the raging storm : “ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble : therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Though deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, and all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me ; yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee ? or to thy faithfulness round about thee ? Thou rulest the raging of the sea : when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

Let these strains mingle with the roaring of the storm, and the dashing of the angry billows, and soon the ear of faith will hear, louder than the loud wind, those accents which have so often

calmed the fears, and stilled the apprehensions of Christ's trembling disciples: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

"Be not Thou far from me, O Lord; for trouble is near. Fearfulness and trembling have taken hold upon me; let Thy strength come in to support me. The sorrows of death compass me. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins. Help me, O Lord, for Thou art my hope. Appear for me when all human help faileth. Make haste to help me. Give me patience to bear all my

sufferings, and quietly to wait Thy time for relief. Thou takest pleasure in them that hope in Thy mercy. Oh, increase my faith ; sustain my hope in Thee. Forsake me not when my strength faileth. If Thou, Lord, wilt be pleased to support me, nothing will be too heavy for me. Oh, make Thy strength perfect in my weakness. Thou who delightest in mercy, save me for Thy mercy's sake. Thou hast said Thou wilt not contend for ever, neither wilt Thou be always wroth ; for the spirit should fail before Thee, and the souls which Thou hast made. Oh, turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ.—*AMEN.*”

Leave God to order all thy ways,
And hope in Him, whate'er betide ;
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days
An all-sufficient strength and guide.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love,
Builds on the rock that nought can move.

What can these anxious cares avail,
These never-ceasing moans and sighs ?
What can it help us to bewail
Each painful moment as it flies ?
Our cross and trials do but press
The heavier for our bitterness.

Only your restless heart keep still,
And wait in cheerful hope, content
To take whate'er His gracious will,
His all-discerning love hath sent;
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who chose us for His own.

He knows when joyful hours are best,
He sends them as He sees it meet,
When thou hast borne its fiery test,
And now art freed from all deceit,
He comes to thee all unaware,
And makes thee own His loving care.

Nor in the heat of pain and strife,
Think God hath cast thee off unheard ;
Nor that the man whose prosperous life
Thou enviest, is of Him preferr'd ;
Time passes and much change doth bring,
And sets a bound to everything.

All are alike before His face ;
'Tis easy to our God most high
To make the rich man poor and base,
To give the poor man wealth and joy.
True wonders still of Him are wrought,
Who setteth up and brings to nought.

Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways,
But do thine own part faithfully ;
Trust His rich promises of grace,
So shall it be fulfill'd in thee ;
God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted Him indeed."

LYRA GERMANICA.

"IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID."

"It is I; be not afraid,"
Thus our loving Saviour said,
When, in human flesh array'd,
Winds and sea His voice obey'd.

"It is I,"—oh, fear not ye,
Face the tempest-troubled sea ;
Mine the power, and mine the will,
My love eternal—"Peace, be still!"

“ It is I,”—I bid thee come ;
Though rough the way, it leadeth home,
My hand is strong to bear thee out,
O faithless, “ wherefore dost thou doubt ? ”

“ It is I,”—when deeply feeling
Your need of Jesus’ perfect healing,
Already hath the plague been stay’d,
Oh, “ fear not, neither be dismay’d ! ”

“ It is I,”—when worn by pain,
You strive to frame your prayers in vain,
Omniscient, I thy *wishes* know,
Omnipotent, can *all* bestow.

“ It is I,”—though doubts prevail,
And though secret fears assail,
In love and pity, as of old,
I’ll keep thee safe within my fold.

“ It is I,”—the Way, the Truth,
The Strength of age, the Guide of youth,
The sinner’s Friend, my loved ones’ Shield,
“ Look unto Me, and be ye heal’d ! ”

J. B.

When ease and quiet are our lot,
Our hearts grow hard and cold ;
Our God and all His love forgot,
We wander from His fold ;
But when His tempests sweep our sky,
His wrath we dare not brave ;
We stoop beneath the blast, and cry,
“ Arise, our God, and save ! ”

Lord, grant that ever in my breast
Such dread of sin may be,
That I may never dream of rest
Or peace, except in Thee ;
That 'neath the calmest, brightest sky
Thy mercy ever gave,
This heart may dread sin's storm, and cry,
“ Arise, my God, and save ! ”

PARISH MUSINGS.

X.

If Need Be.



1 PETER 4. 6.

“ Though now for a season, (*if need be,*) ye are in heaviness.”

OF all things, the most difficult is to realise truly “the need be,” for our own personal trials. We see it readily in the case of another, although our judgment is often very erroneous. We will quickly discover how cold and indifferent he had become,—how the world had been gaining the mastery over him,—how his time and talents were being spent far too much in caring for things seen and temporal. But when it comes to our own turn,—when we are compelled, as it were, to open up some pages in the “book of the heart,” and find there many charges against us, we are seldom at a loss to find excuses. “True, we have not been so diligent as we used to be, but then, how many necessary cares have taken hold upon us ; true, we have been less fervent in prayer, less frequently in our closet, but we have been regular in attending the house of God, we have not failed in the external duties of religion.

And then, our trials are so much heavier than those of others, who are careless, indifferent, avowed worldlings." In short, we inwardly think that our lot is a very *hard* one,—that our cross is the most painful,—our suffering the most agonising,—our path the most thorny. And all this arises from the fact, that we have not discovered the "need be."

How could we? At the best, our spiritual eyesight is weak and dim. We cannot know the real state of our souls, or see them as He does, whose searching scrutiny detects the slightest symptom of disease. We fancy all is well when we are sick, wounded, ready to die. We imagine that all is right with the heart, when faith is weak, love cold, hope almost obscured. Only gradually, after having been *long* in the school of trial, do we *begin* to realise that the Physician *must* probe the wound within us, and apply severe remedies, and cause pain and anguish, in order to cure the malady which is preying upon us,—only after we have passed through the trying ordeal, and feel that the pulse is beating more regularly, and the blood is coursing through the system with a healthier flow,—only *then* can we rightly comprehend

our former weakness, and thank God that in tender love He cared for us, not hesitating to inflict pain, not withdrawing His hand, not sparing the rod, that He might do us good in the end.

Christian, just reflect for a little on some of the "needs be" for affliction and trial. Only a few can we here discover : in eternity we may hope they will all be revealed to us, but now "we see through a glass darkly."

"If need be," affliction will be sent for the purpose of bringing us to *realise* whether our religion be genuine or not. "We perhaps thought ourselves Christians, and that we were founded on the Rock; and now an affliction comes, and we shake like aspen leaves. Could this be if we were really standing on the Rock? We thought fondly that God was the chosen portion of our souls, and that, though all earthly joys were taken from us, we had enough when we had Him; and yet, when He crosses some desire of our hearts, or removes some of His own gifts, we seem as if we had lost our all, and speedily grow sad and disconsolate; and thus we learn the fact, that our comfort did not before, as we supposed, flow from the Eternal

Fountain, but had been drawn from perishing cisterns; and therefore, now they are broken, we die of thirst. This is an important discovery to us, and it was to make this discovery to us that God sent the affliction."

"If need be," pain and suffering will be our lot until we both discern and acknowledge God's hand in the visitation. We are very backward to do this. We endeavour to account for our misfortunes, losses, and troubles, by turning our thoughts to second causes. Although, when affliction comes, we may say in words, "It is the work of God;" yet we do not, in our inmost hearts realise the meaning of the expression,—we do not humbly and submissively acknowledge, "the Lord hath done it." How often do we hear those who have been visited by sore calamity,—whose comforts and enjoyments have been suddenly interrupted,—passionately lamenting over their misfortune, and bitterly complaining that such has been their unexpected fate! Friends are removed, riches pass away, health rapidly declines, and they say, "Had we only taken this step or that, had we adopted this precaution or that, it would not have happened, it would not have been so with

us." It was their own imprudence, the falsehood or wickedness of others, the badness of the seasons, the unhealthy state of the atmosphere. Thus they "labour to push God out of their concerns,"—the Sovereign of the universe is, as it were, dethroned,—and they must be brought to feel, that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground," but that God is the Author of our troubles,—that He owns Himself as such, and would have His children to discern His presence,—trace the work of His hand,—feel that He is chastising them, and that He means to do them good thereby.

And, reader, it is when we come to know and realise this, that we begin to reap the benefit of affliction. So long as we attribute it only to second causes, there will be no submission, no gratitude, no praise. It is only when we see that a Father's hand has been laid upon us,—when we realise that *He* is withdrawing our comforts, blighting our hopes, and filling our hearts with grief,—that it is *He* that causes the piercing thorns to spring up around our path,—*He* that commissions the fierce disease to commit its fearful ravages, and bids the gloomy

grave open to receive our much-loved friends ; —it is only then, that the soul is led to solemn thought, the rising murmur is suppressed, and in meek submission we are brought to say, “ It is the Lord, let *Him* do as seemeth *Him* good.” “ I was dumb,” said David, “ I opened not my mouth, because *Thou* didst it.” “ The *Lord* gave,” is the submissive language of Job, “ and the *Lord* hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord.”

“ If need be,” sickness and trial will be sent again and again, until we learn to sit loose to the world, and have our chief joy in God. How often have we risen from a sick bed and returned to our folly ! how often have we had trial, and very soon become as giddy and thoughtless as ever ! But if we are God’s children, He will not suffer it so to be. He will again mingle the cup for us to drink, again withdraw some blessing, and lead our thoughts heavenward, deepen our repentance, bring us to humility at His footstool. Oh, how thankful should we be that God will not suffer us to injure ourselves !—that He will send pain, sickness, weariness, distress, languor, agony of mind and body, to rouse us from our lethargy and carelessness—to show

us that the life we have been wasting is an earnest thing,—that our souls are precious in His sight,—and that He desires our eternal well-being and salvation !

And, finally, (as including many other gracious designs,) “if need be,” affliction and trial will be sent to increase our longings after an absent Saviour, to intensify our desires for heavenly bliss, and to bring us to cherish the feeling of the apostle, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Willing to remain so long as God needs our service here, we should yet long to join the “general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” Patient and submissive under the hand of God, we may, nevertheless, ardently long for the hour when we shall be freed from the body of sin and death. “For we know,” saith the apostle, “that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven : If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan,

being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight :) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

"Here we groan, being burdened." Yes, it is a burden,—a trial—even though a sanctified one—yet a trial still—to be subject to the varied afflictions, which body, soul, and spirit endure under the chastening hand of God,—bodily pains, and bitter bereavements, and sad separations, and the severing in twain of dearest bonds, and the breaking up of past remembrances, and the blight of disappointment, and the stripping away of earthly comforts, and the snapping asunder of earthly supports. "No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous." Therefore the believer looks forward to that time when he shall have done with sin and sorrow,—when neither weakness, nor weariness,

nor wasting anxieties, nor the anguish of separations, nor clouds of sadness, nor the tremblings of doubt,—not any, nor all of these shall again break his repose, or interrupt the current of his heavenly joy. He knows that in the home of the redeemed—whither he is going—his bitterest anguish will be soothed, his tears for ever wiped away,—that *there* the mournful circumstances of the present life will all be forgotten, being merged in the glories of the eternal world,—that his losses will be far more than compensated—his patient endurance of sanctified affliction abundantly rewarded.

And, therefore, in the midst of his present trials and distresses, he “walks by faith, not by sight,”—his thoughts stretch onward, and penetrate the future,—he dwells upon the glorious prospect revealed to him in Scripture, of that everlasting home where no sin will ever interfere with his holiness, no trouble disturb his tranquillity,—where no sorrow will ever sadden his spirit, no darkness ever cloud his sky, and thus it is that, when oppressed with cares, or suffering under afflictions, he binds yet more closely to his heart the precious promises of God,—his soul is inspired with a deeper devotion, and a

holier steadfastness, and a more earnest perseverance, by the contemplation of the “glory yet to be revealed.” Every fresh trial quickens the glance of the eagle eye,—every new affliction adds a bolder impulse to the soarings of hope;—the coming glory and the promised crown,—the heavenly mansions, and the immediate presence of Christ;—all these impart comfort to him when dejected,—revive his fainting heart, and nerve him with fresh strength when weak and weary.

Take courage, then, sons and daughters of tribulation. “Let not your heart be troubled.” Remember the assurance of your Saviour, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” If united to Jesus by a living faith,—if you have made Him your life, your hope, your strength, your being’s end and aim,—your sole hope, your sole strength, your main end and aim,—then, be assured, He will lead you safely on through trial, and trouble, and sorrow. He will prove to you, His readiness to help,—His delight in helping,—His grace and goodness,—His love and tenderness. “He will

hold you by your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not." In every fresh trial you will realise more of His sympathy,—in every time of trouble you will experience more of His love,—in every hour of danger you will see more of His power,—and, at length, in the day of your utmost weakness and sorest need, you will know the fulness and perfection of His strength. Be resting on Him for all your comfort, hope, help, and deliverance. Ask of Him in every fresh trial to impart more grace, and under every circumstance of the trial say, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" Beg of Him increasing submission and thankfulness of spirit,—above all, a growing conformity to Himself, both in doing and suffering. Pray that He may be pleased to lighten your affliction, and alleviate your sorrow; but wait patiently His pleasure, and seek not to escape your burden, pain, or trouble, till He sees meet.

Be assured, if you are of Christ's flock, all shall be well with you. You will soon be "delivered from the burden of the flesh," and be in "joy and felicity" for ever. You will "come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee

away." You will enter a land where there is no pain, no suffering; where the days of mourning shall be ended, and God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes. Yet a little more toil, a little more labour, a little more endurance, and your probation state will finish, and that Saviour, whom you are now delighting to serve, "will come again, and receive you unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also."

"What though our bark a dreary course pursue,
We have the haven of our rest in view;
How grateful soon the calm which ne'er shall
cease!
How bright the visions of eternal peace!"

Almighty and most merciful Father, our only refuge and strength, who, though unseen by our bodily eyes, art continually about our bed and about our path, and seest all our ways,—who art the Author of all the various comforts which we here enjoy, and to whom we look for all future blessing,—I desire humbly to bow down before Thee.

Oh, give me to feel the necessity for trial, distress, and suffering. Let me not repine under them. Help me to realise Thy mercy in

thus caring for me,—in not suffering me to perish utterly,—in not casting me off for ever from Thy fatherly care, as Thou mightest justly have done. Oh, fill me with a lively sense of Thy goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering.

Pardon, O God, my sinfulness, my hardness of heart, my coldness, my waywardness. Oh, apply by Thy Spirit the blood of sprinkling. Unite me more closely to my dear Saviour. Be pleased, O Lord, to guide, help, and deliver me. I am very weak, and unable to keep myself. I am prone to murmur, repine, and forget my high calling; but I implore the aid of Thy Holy Spirit to uphold, strengthen, and sanctify me. And, O Lord God, if at any time sin prevail against me, bring me back to Jesus my Advocate with Thee, that through repentance and faith in Him I may be forgiven and restored. Keep me, O God, by Thy mighty power, through faith unto salvation, for the sake of Him who hath loved me, and who knoweth all my infirmities, even Jesus Christ our Lord
—AMEN.

Life is before you ! from the fated road
Ye cannot turn ; then take ye up the load.
Not yours to tread or leave the unknown way ;
Ye *must* go o'er it, meet ye what ye may.
What though the brightness wane, the pleasures
fade,
The glory dim. Oh, not of these is made
The awful life that to your trust is given !
Children of God ! inheritors of heaven !
Mourn not the perishing of each fair toy ;
Ye were ordain'd *to do*, and not t' enjoy ;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin ;
But onwards, upwards, till the goal you win.
God guard you ! and God guide you on your
way,
Young warrior pilgrims, who set forth to-day !

MRS BUTLER.

Mourn, O rejoicing heart !
The hours are flying ;
Each one some treasure takes,
Each one some blossom breaks,
And leaves it dying.

The chill dark night draws near,
Thy sun will soon depart,
And leave thee sighing ;
Then mourn, rejoicing heart !
The hours are flying.

Rejoice, O grieving heart !
The hours fly past ;
With each some sorrow dies,
With each some shadow flies,
Until at last
The red dawn in the east
Bids weary night depart,
And pain is past.
Rejoice, then, grieving heart !
The hours fly past.

MISS PROCTOR.

XI.

Heabter Sorrows.

JOB ix. 28.

“ I am afraid of all my sorrows.”

WHEN trial after trial comes upon us, or when our prayers seem unanswered, and our days and nights of sickness are multiplied, we are prone not merely to get discouraged, but to be ever conjuring up phantoms of coming evil. We do not *look out* for a bright light. We sit down gloomily amid the darkness, terrified to move,—expecting some fresh sorrow,—dwelling only on some new imaginary grief, which we fancy is impending over us. We will not even admit the entrance of hope—our hearts are shut against it; and instead of drawing nearer and nearer to God, the longer He chastens us, we give ourselves up to sinful despondency, and stand at a distance from Him. We will not perhaps acknowledge to our own hearts, far less to any earthly friend, but our feelings are somewhat of this nature—“ Why should *I* hope? I have met with nothing save disappointment,—why should *I* expect relief? my burden con-

tinues to press upon me with increasing weight, —why should I still entreat an answer to my prayers? they have all been rejected, and remain unheard.” Ah, if we have *ever* cherished such sentiments as these, if they are even now taking possession of us, let us beware! This may be the very reason why God withdraws not His chastening hand,—the very reason why His comforts have not delighted our souls,—the very reason why we are left to suffer, to agonise, to fear, to despair. Let us reflect what God’s purpose is; it is to *draw us to Him*, not to *drive us away from Him*. He would have us *come* to Him in sorrow, and not *leave* Him until we have won our suit. He would have us *cling* to the assurance of His love, even though it bear the semblance of the flame-breath of the furnace. He would have us *believe* that He hears us, even though He delay long to answer, and seem to disregard our petition.

This is *His* design; but if we frustrate it, if we refuse to learn the lesson He desires to teach us, then He will send “heavier sorrows” to effect His purpose. Nothing but our *whole* hearts, our entire confidence, our complete submission, our willing acquiescence in *all* that He

appoints, will satisfy Him. He will not accept half-confidence, half-reliance, half-desires, but He will continue to *deal* with us. He will send messenger after messenger, trial upon trial, and sorrow upon sorrow, until we have been brought low,—brought in penitence to His footstool,—brought, it may be, faint, bleeding, wounded, to say, in the language of heartfelt submission, “Lord, I am Thine, do with me as Thou pleasest; I desire to yield myself entirely to Thee, to do or suffer, according to Thy pleasure.” Oh blessed result of continued trial! when thus the believer comes to will what God wills,—to choose what God chooses,—to have this much of the mind that was in Christ.

But the ordeal which is passed through before all this is accomplished is painful and trying. We are sure, from the declaration of Holy Scripture, that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,” and that in some way or other, every one who believes in Christ Jesus will be brought to submission, trust, acquiescence in the will of God. But we know not the *various* steps in this process; we know not the path of “tribulation” through which multitudes have gone to glory,—the months and years they *first* spent in

sadness, pain, and suffering, ere they could say, "Thy will be done,"—the hard, stern, and inflexible discipline they had to undergo ere they realised true, hearty submission,—the pangs and sorrows they brought upon themselves ere they were permitted to taste the "joys of His salvation."

But, *knowing* that trial is meant to *draw* us to God,—that fretfulness and murmuring, or a gloomy foreboding of coming ills, tend to frustrate His gracious purpose,—and that the sooner we yield ourselves up to Him, in heart and soul, in will, affection, and desire, the sooner will we be able to "rejoice in Him;"—knowing this, oh, let it be our earnest prayer that *now*, even *now*, we may receive grace to say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," and yield ourselves meekly, as the redeemed of Christ, to the hand of God, as of a loving Father.

It may be He will accept our submission and quiet waiting upon Him, and release us from the rough discipline of still sharper affliction. Not that we should desire to be freed from it merely because it is painful, but because we have learned God's lesson, and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, been enabled to enter a path in which

these "heavier sorrows" are no longer necessary.

Christian, what is thy present frame of mind? Hast thou been brought to submission, or art thou sitting sad and disconsolate, brooding over thy troubles, vexed with dark forebodings, and refusing to be comforted? Oh, it is not wise to act thus! Thou art displeasing thy Father,—thou art wounding thy Saviour,—thou art grieving the Holy Spirit. I know thou wilt not be utterly forsaken. I know that, although thy murmurings and despondency might well provoke God to cast thee off for ever, He will still have mercy upon thee. He will follow thee in thy wanderings away from Him. He will call upon thee to return. But, ah! think what thou art bringing upon thyself by indulging in a fretful, morose, and gloomy temper! Thou art rendering *necessary* another and another stroke of affliction—bringing on thyself more bitter griefs and "heavier sorrows." Thou art provoking thy Father to hide His face still from thee, and withhold His comforts, and keep thee in the furnace. Thou thinkest that thy present sorrow is as heavy as it can be,—that the darkness could not be more appalling

and dreadful than it is. Ah, foolish one ! what *is* thy sorrow ? Perhaps thou art the victim of disease,—thy body is often racked with pain,—thy nights are spent in wakefulness, and thy days in sadness.

But, has God *no* “*heavier* sorrow ?” Look at thy comforts ! Kind friends to sympathise with thee, and to relieve thy wants,—the prayers of the faithful, which are continually rising up in behalf of “all who are in affliction or trouble of any kind,”—the promises of God, which are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” Think, too, of thy *past* blessings,—days, months, and years of health,—prosperity and peace attending thy steps,—the sunshine gladdening thee,—no storm threatening thee. And wilt thou now give way to murmuring and despondency, because thy God has seen meet to send trial ? He might strip you of *every* blessing, even as He has removed *one*. He might give you *no* rest from pain. He might visit you with pinching want as well as painful sickness. He might with His arrow strike down every loved one whose affection is now so precious to you ; and, worse than all, He might “leave you alone.” Believe it, nothing is gained by struggling, by gloomy

forebodings of evil, or by impatience under the trial sent by God. Dost thou wish God to care for thee? dost thou desire to be His child, to place thy soul in His keeping? Then leave to Him *everything*,—to send joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness. Disturb not thyself about *coming* evils. The future, if thou art only willing to submit to God, can but bring thee good; it may appear evil, but “He bringeth good *out* of evil.”

Instead of indulging in gloomy forebodings,—instead of thus tempting God to inflict “heavier sorrows,”—instead of barring with thine own hand the entrance of peace, comfort, submission, hope, by fancying that *now* there is no joy for thee, no happiness in life, no blessing in the future, no termination to pain—nothing but sorrow and grief and trouble,—turn away from all these things, bid them farewell for ever, and take a pilgrimage in thought to Gethsemane and Calvary. Gaze upon Him “who left us an example that we should follow His steps.” He knows all the sorrows that await Him,—the shame, the suffering, the anguish,—but He takes the bitter cup, and, with His heart set on the salvation of His people—His heart set on

thee—the blessed Saviour drains it to the very dregs. See Him on Calvary—unpitied by the crowd—deserted by His disciples—forsaken by His Father—the Lamb led to the slaughter,—and all for thee ! Oh, surely such a contemplation should lead thee to cry, “ My Saviour-God, let me be dumb like Thee,—let me never open my mouth in complaining,—let me entrust my future to Thee and Thee alone,—let me enter into fellowship with Thee in suffering, and count it all joy that I am permitted to follow Thee in the path of tribulation, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of trial, and the giving up of my will to my Father’s.”

Oh, if thus you bow your soul before the cross, comfort will flow in upon you, tranquillity will take the place of fear, and forebodings of evil will be exchanged for childlike submission. A hand will “ sustain you under every burden, so that, smiling at yesterday’s fears, you shall say, ‘ This is easy, this is light ; ’ every ‘ lion in the way,’ as you come upon it, shall be seen chained.” And whether your trial be removed or not, it will be sanctified in your growing conformity to the image and mind of Christ,—in your progressive advancement in holiness,—in

your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Hear the language of one who underwent a painful discipline for many years, and who had learned to take everything cheerfully from her Father's hand :—" I want," she says, " to have no will of my own ; I want to have all my wishes and inclinations lost in the will of God, so that, if I see His will apparent in anything, I may with pleasure do or suffer that thing,—yes, do or suffer it, as if it were the very thing I liked best, because it is the will of God." And again it is recorded of another afflicted believer :—" For thirty-six years the victim of incurable maladies, often undergoing excruciating agony, sometimes for a long period blind, few have experienced the exquisite enjoyments of which her shattered tenement was the habitual abode ; as she said to a friend, ' My nights are very pleasant in general. I feel like David, when he said, " I wait for the Lord ; my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope ;" ' and while I am enabled to contemplate the wonders of redeeming grace and love, the hours pass swiftly on, and the morn appears even before I am aware. I experience so much of the Saviour's love in

supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase. . . . I think that one end to be answered in my long affliction is, encouragement for others to trust in Him.’”

Reader, pray that such a spirit may be imparted to you,—that ever as you move onward in life’s journey, you “may cast all your care on Him who careth for you,” assured that He will bring you safely home. Strive to follow the example of one who thus writes of himself:—
“For a long time I felt myself to be a lost sheep, not knowing on whom to rely ; and now, with the deepest consciousness that I have at last attained rest, I exclaim, ‘The Lord is my shepherd !’ What is there that can harm me ? I have reached the harbour, and storms can no more drive my little vessel afloat upon the wide sea. And as I look forward into the future, I can exclaim with David, ‘*I shall not want !* Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’”

O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who dost not willingly afflict the children of men, but dost rebuke and chasten those whom

Thou lovest, look down upon me Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me, for Christ's sake. Oh, grant me grace to bear with patience whatever Thou art pleased to send ! Preserve me from all murmuring, fretfulness, and impatience, and enable me without doubting to accept all things as coming from Thee. Let my soul be supported by faith, hope, and love, under all the sufferings I may yet endure. Teach me to remember that all sickness, pain, and grief, are the fruit of sin. Whatever offences I have committed against Thee, oh, do Thou mercifully forgive me, and make me heartily sorry for them !

Lord, grant that this affliction may be sanctified to my spiritual and eternal good. Bless the means that are used, and make them effectual, if it be Thy good pleasure, for restoring me to health, that I may again praise Thee in the assembly of Thy people.

I acknowledge it to be of Thy bounty alone that I have my being, and I adore Thy mercy and long-suffering for preserving me thus long in the land of the living. My many days and years of health and comfort have been Thy gift, and my deliverance out of the troubles and

dangers wherewith I have at any time been visited, are owing to Thee alone. Grant me, O Lord, I beseech Thee, a due sense of my entire dependence upon Thee. Inspire me with that true and heavenly wisdom which may help me to discern aright the reasons, and enable me to answer the ends, of all Thy dealings with me, that in the dispensation of Thy providence I may submit myself entirely to Thy good pleasure, and glorify God in the day of visitation. Do with me what is good in Thy sight. Let patience have her perfect work. If this sickness be unto death, oh, prepare me for it, that I may depart only to be with Thee! If it be Thy will that I recover, may I rise from a sick-bed strong through Thy grace to walk far more closely with my God than ever I have yet done to the end of my life. I offer up every prayer through the merits and intercession of my gracious Redeemer.—AMEN.

CHILDLIKE FAITH.

Help me with childlike faith, O Lord,
Simply to take Thee at Thy word ;

What Thou dost speak, that I would hear ;
What Thou condemnest, I would fear ;
What Thou dost give me, I would take
With thankfulness, for Jesus' sake.

Help me with childlike heart to love
My heavenly Father, God above ;
And with a childlike wonder trace,
In all things Thou hast made, a grace
And loveliness and tender care,
Thy love's true tokens everywhere.

Help me to cling with childlike trust
To Thy strong arm ; and as the gust
Makes the lithe tendrils of the vine
Closer and yet more closely twine,
So let Thy child's poor faith be strengthen'd,
By the hard day of trial lengthen'd.

Help me with childlike hope to bound
Far on before the present's round ;
Gazing with simple childlike eyes
On the bright fields of paradise ;
And with true-hearted faith to live
In the blest hope the Scriptures give.

J. E. B.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 14.

I am oppress'd, my gracious God !
I cry beneath Thy chastening rod ;
Lord, undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; I look around
And see Thy judgment's heavy cloud ;
Oh, undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; I weep with those
Who sorrow 'neath a Christian's woes ;
Then undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; I bear within
A heart that's fill'd with shame and sin,
Yet undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; at my right hand
The tempter of my soul doth stand ;
Lord, undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; behold my tears,
Receive my prayer, remove my fears ;
Still undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; O Saviour, say
That Thou wilt wipe my tears away,
And undertake for me.

Saviour ! though my rebellious will
Has been by Thy blest power renew'd,
Yet in its secret workings still
How much remains to be subdued !

Oft I recall, with grief and shame,
How many years their course had run,
Ere grace my murmuring heart o'ercame,
Ere I could say, "Thy will be done."

I wish'd a flowery path to tread,
And thought 'twould safely lead to heaven ;
A lonely room, a suffering bed,
These for my training-place were given.

Long I resisted, mourn'd, complain'd,
Wish'd any other lot my own ;
Thy purpose, Lord, unchanged remain'd ;
What wisdom plann'd, love carried on.

Year after year I turn'd away ;
But marr'd was every scheme I plann'd ;
Still the same lesson, day by day,
Was placed before me by Thy hand.

At length Thy patient, wondrous love,
Unchanging, tender, pitying, strong,

Avail'd that stony heart to move,
Which had rebell'd, alas ! so long.

Then was I taught by Thee to say,
“ Do with me what to Thee seems best ;
Give, take whate'er Thou wilt away,
Health, comfort, usefulness, or rest.

“ Be my whole life in suffering spent ;
But let me be in suffering Thine ;
Still, O my Lord, I am content,
Thou now hast made Thy pleasure mine.”

M. E.

XII.

Sunshine.

PSALM iv. 6.

“Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

A TIME of sickness is not unfrequently a time of gloom. We seem to be surrounded with thick darkness. As in the natural world, when dense clouds come between us and the light of the sun, we are more timid and fearful,—as in threading our way amid precipices and pitfalls, we tremble to find the shades of evening gathering around us; so when in the dangerous pilgrimage of life we find ourselves suddenly enwrapped in mist and gloom, our hearts begin to fail, and our fears are awakened at every onward step. We lose for a while the comforting sense of the Divine favour and presence; we are cast down by the pressure of painful doubts and apprehensions; we know not which way to turn for light, and the language of our troubled souls often is, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Why has this darkness come upon me? why am I left so comfortless? why is the hand withdrawn which used to guide me?—

why the comfort withheld which used to gladden me?—why the peace destroyed which used to quiet me?—why do these fears, and doubts, and apprehensions so gather round and beset my soul?

Suffering one, have *you* not experienced this sadness?—have you not agonised under the appalling thought that your God and Father had forsaken you—that the light was for ever withdrawn which was the very joy of your heart? Lying on your sick-bed, have you not passed many a weary, anxious hour trying to discover, “Why is it so with me? why has my health been taken away? why has trouble been sent upon me? wherefore, O my God, art Thou angry with Thy child? and wherefore dost Thou leave me to grope my way through such impenetrable darkness?”

Oh! this is the ordeal of sickness,—this is part of the “much tribulation.” No “strange” thing has happened unto thee. Thy Father has not left thee, neither has He withdrawn the sunshine of His favour. He has only permitted clouds to intervene, dark and mysterious providences to come across the sky, and dangers to threaten you for a season. And He has had

the wisest reasons for so doing. He knew how prone His children ever are to forget or undervalue their most precious blessings,—how the world, and our daily intercourse with it, tend to weaken and destroy our longings for heavenly communion and fellowship,—how the uninterrupted continuance of blessing and comfort and peace is not conducive to the growth and development of the Christian character, but oftentimes lead to listlessness, inactivity, and spiritual pride.

Therefore does He send trial, distress, suffering; therefore does He remove some valued blessing or comfort; therefore does He command the clouds to gather and to cast their deepening shadows round His loved one. It is not that He delights in giving pain, or in lessening the peace and comfort of His children. Oh, no ! It is that they may long more ardently for *that* of which they have been for a season deprived; it is that the darkness may make the sunshine more precious,—that the fears and doubts may intensify the desire for peace and security,—that the absence of spiritual joy may reawaken the longing for its return,—that the dangers and perils which ever and anon are

exciting the cry for help may lead the trembling one to distrust self, to feel no security in mere human help, but to look upwards to Him “whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, whose ear is not heavy that it cannot hear.”

“It is in this way that a *forgotten* God recalls our wandering affections to Himself. He lays waste the enthroned creature that He may once again enthrone Himself. He breaks the cistern, not that we may be left parched and fainting in the wilderness of life, but go and satisfy our thirsting souls once again from the everlasting spring. He crushes the reed, but He substitutes for it a rock. He puts far away from us ‘lover and friend,’ with all the unutterable sweetness of their affection and the tenderness of their love; but what does He substitute? Himself, the intense, unfathomable love of His own infinite mind, the presence of Christ, and communion with heaven.”

Precious surely is the time of sickness if it accomplish this gracious design,—if it bring the soul to a nearer, closer, more intimate and endearing fellowship with its God and Father. Painful it doubtless is to undergo this discipline,

yet is it needful. And shall we for a moment compare the brief interval of suffering with the season of restored joy and peace and gladness? What though health may have declined? what though we may have been withdrawn from the world, and have been robbed of some of its enjoyments? To have again the assurance of the Father's love, of the Saviour's intercession, of the Spirit's help and guidance, oh, is not this infinitely more precious? To feel that our spiritual energies have been quickened and renewed,—that our faith, and love, and hope, have been strengthened and increased,—that our thoughts and feelings, our desires and aspirations, have all become more heavenly and pure,—oh, surely it was well for us that we were left for a season amid the darkness, until our cry of distress was heard and answered, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

Yes, Christian, these seasons of darkness and trembling are all needed, and it is only when we come to realise how much we have gained by them that we see how gracious, kind, and good our heavenly Father has been in permitting them, and that we feel assured that they

are as much the fruit of His tender love as His more obvious blessings. Faint not then, suffering one, if even yet thou hast not realised the full measure of God's love in thy trial. Be sure thou art precious in His sight; and although He suffers thee for a while to tread a dark and dangerous path, yet He is nigh at hand. Still grope on, albeit with a trembling heart; pray on, albeit with faltering tongue. The darkness will yet be dispersed; the gloom will pass away; thy trial hour will come to an end, and thou wilt again rejoice in "the light of thy Father's countenance."

"'A little while,' 'twill soon be past ;

Why should we shun the shame and cross?

Oh, let us in His footsteps haste,

Counting for Him all else but loss.

Oh, how will recompense His smile

The sufferings of this ' little while ! ' "

Not for ever has the hand of love been withdrawn,—not for ever has the voice of mercy been hushed to silence,—not for ever has the fountain of heavenly blessing and joy been sealed up,—not for ever has the sunshine de-

parted, and the misty shadows gathered round thee. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage." He will strengthen thine heart. Yes, He will "lift upon thee the light of His countenance," and whisper words of consolation and endearment. He will take thee by the hand, and guide thee over the slippery places. He will refresh thy soul with heavenly manna and living water. He will reveal to thee more than thou hast ever yet known of the beauties of holiness,—the attractiveness of spiritual communion and intercourse,—the joy of living in sensible fellowship, and in childlike simplicity and trustfulness, with thy God and Redeemer. And at length, when the end of the journey has been reached, when thy soul is meetened for a more glorious land, He will send His messenger of love. "Arise, trembling disciple, and come away. Thy journey here is ended,—thy warfare is finished. Now wilt thou realise the faithfulness and love of thy Redeemer in the valley of the shadow of death. Now will His arm sustain thee and 'His voice cheer and comfort thee. He comes to receive you to Himself, that where He is, there you may be also.' He has prepared a place for thee in the mansions

of His Father's house, and He waits to welcome thee. He sends thee His promise and assurance, saying, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.'"

Oh, sweet and blessed hour for the weary and toil-worn! Who shall describe the happiness awaiting the believer in that world where the "sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself, and where the days of mourning shall be ended?" True, the valley must be passed through, and it is dark; but there is a song of triumph prepared for that hour. We must bid farewell to time and time's possessions,—farewell to the loved ones who have been our companions in life's journey,—farewell to home, and friends, and earthly blessings. And such an hour is full of deep and awful solemnity; but, blessed be God, there is a light which can penetrate even the darkness of death's valley,—there is a voice whose whispered accents will then fall sweetly on the listening ear, and calm every rising apprehension. "I am with thee still." Thy Saviour is near.

He has come to fulfil His promise. Let thy soul cling to it with unshaken confidence. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

"Shudder not to pass the stream;
Venture all thy care on Him;
Him, whose dying love and power
Still'd its tossing, hush'd its roar.

Safe is the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer's eve;
Not one object of His care
Ever suffer'd shipwreck there.

See the haven full in view;
Love Divine shall bear thee through;
Trust to that propitious gale;
Weigh thy anchor, spread thy sail."

Soon shalt thou bask in the unclouded radiance of thy Father's countenance; thou shalt see the King in His beauty, and have no more need to offer the prayer, "Lord, lift on me the light of

Thy countenance," for never again shall a passing cloud fling its dark shadow between thee and thy God,—never again shalt thou know doubt, or fear, or peril,—no evening will ever come,—no gloomy night enwrap thy spirit; but thou shalt "have fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore."

O Lord, heavenly Father, I beseech Thee look down in pity and compassion upon me, Thine afflicted servant ! I desire to acknowledge my humble sense of my sins, negligences, and errors, and to plead the all-sufficient merits and the precious blood-shedding of Christ my Saviour. Blessed Jesus ! Thy followers and people have the assurance of Thine own gracious declaration, that if they come to Thee weary and heavy-laden they shall find rest unto their souls. O Saviour of the world ! I come to Thee weary and heavy-laden with the burden of sin ; may I find deliverance in Thee ! May I find access to Thy favour by that living way which Thou has appointed. May my faith fail not in the day of trial ! and when clouds and darkness are around my steps, oh, be Thou near to help me, and to lift upon me the light of Thy counte-

nance ! Grant, O Lord, that I may be kept from all distrust or murmuring, and may I have grace to resign myself into Thy hands, with entire submission to Thy wise appointments. Thou, Lord, knowest the discipline I need, the furnace of trial through which I must pass, till the love of sin is wholly removed, and my heart purified from all iniquity. Help me by Thy Holy Spirit to surrender my will to Thine, and to feel assured that Thine eye of love is ever watching me. Oh, calm my spirit, and speak peace to me in my anxieties, and enable me to say under every trying dispensation, however grievous, "Blessed be the name of the Lord !" Give me patience to bear all my sufferings, and quietly to wait Thy time for relief. Thou takest pleasure in them that hope in Thy mercy ; oh, increase my faith, sustain my hope in Thee ! Forsake me not when my strength faileth. If Thou, Lord, wilt be pleased to support me, nothing will be too heavy for me. Oh, make Thy strength perfect in my weakness ! Thou who delightest in mercy, save me for Thy mercy's sake. Thou knowest my exceeding weakness. Oh, hold Thou me up, that my footsteps slip not ! Strengthen me with all Thy might, ac-

according to Thy glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness. Gracious God, restore me to health, if it seem good unto Thee, in order to Thy great ends, and my own interest.

And however Thou shalt determine concerning me in this, yet make my repentance perfect, my passage safe, and my faith strong; that when Thou shalt call my soul from the prison of the body, it may enter into the rest of the sons of God, through Jesus Christ. And to Thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all glory and praise, world without end.
—AMEN.

JOHN XXI. 15-17.

“Thou knowest,” Lord, the weariness and
sorrow

Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest,
Cares of to-day and burdens of to-morrow,

Blessings implored, and sins to be confess'd;
I come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
And lay them at Thy feet, Thou knowest, Lord.

“Thou knowest” all the past, how long and
blindly

On the dark mountains the lost wanderer
stray’d,

How the Good Shepherd follow’d, and how
kindly

He bore it home, upon His shoulders laid,
And heal’d the bleeding wounds, and soothed
the pain,

And brought back life, and hope, and strength
again.

“Thou knowest” all the present, each tempta-
tion,

Each toilsome duty, each foreboding fear ;
All to myself assign’d of tribulation,

Or to beloved ones, than self more dear !
All pensive memories as I journey on,
Longings for vanish’d smiles and voices gone.

“Thou knowest” all the future gleams of glad-
ness,

By stormy clouds too quickly overcast,—
Hopes of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be cross’d at last :

Oh, what could confidence and hope afford
To tread that path, but this, "Thou knowest,
Lord ! "

"Thou knowest," not alone as God all-knowing;
As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast
proved
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing—
O Saviour, Thou has wept, and Thou hast
loved !

And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.

Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet,
On everlasting strength my weakness staying,
Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete.

Then rising and refresh'd, I leave Thy throne,
And follow on to know as I am known.

2 KINGS XX. 19.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !

His will is ever just :

Howe'er He orders now my cause,

I will be still and trust.

He is my God,

Though dark my road ;

He holds me that I shall not fall,

Wherefore to Him I leave it all.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !

He never will deceive ;

He leads me by the proper path,

And so to Him I cleave,

And take content

What He hath sent ;—

His hand can turn my griefs away,

And patiently I wait His day.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !

He taketh thought for me ;

The cup that my Physician gives

No poison'd draught can be,

But medicine due ;
For God is true,
And on that changeless truth I build,
And all my heart with hope is fill'd.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !
Though I the cup must drink
That bitter seems to my faint heart,
I will not fear nor shrink :

Tears pass away
With dawn of day ;
Sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart,
And pain and sorrow all depart.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !
My Light, my Life, is He,
Who cannot will me aught but good—
I trust Him utterly ;
For well I know,
In joy or woe,

We soon shall see, as sunlight clear,
How faithful was our Guardian here.

Whate'er my God ordains is right !
Here will I take my stand—
Though sorrow, need, or death, make earth
For me a desert land,

My Father's care
Is round me there ;
He holds me that I shall not fall,
And so to Him I leave it all.

LYRA GERMANICA.

XIII.

Grace Sufficient.

2 COR. xii. 9.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

NOTHING affords such sweet comfort in a time of sickness and trial as the thought of the “*all-sufficiency*” of Christ our Redeemer. Be our case ever so trying, our wants ever so numerous, our enemies ever so strong, our fears ever so appalling, our danger ever so imminent—Jesus is “all-sufficient.” It is only our *weak faith* that makes us to become downcast and sad at heart. What is the assurance of Scripture? “He is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good word and work.” “*All grace!*”—“all sufficiency!”—in “all things”—and these to ‘abound.’ “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”

Here there is enough surely to afford comfort—“*grace,*” “*sufficiency,*” “*pity.*”

Christian, what is your sorrow—your trial—your temptation?

Is it, “I have had a lengthened time of sickness and pain,—my strength has failed, and the skill of man has been unavailing? Around me I can see no ray of hope,—no symptom of returning health,—no indication of the removal of my disease,—and my prayers have returned to me unanswered.”

Ah, Christian, it is to be feared there is within thee a spirit of murmuring. Whose hand is laid upon thee? Thy Father’s. Why has He chastened thee? To bring *thy* will fully into conformity with *His* own. Does not He, “to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid,” know best *when* His gracious purpose has been accomplished in thee, His child? Is it not a token for good that thy days have been prolonged? He waits but to see thee bowing submissively before Him—saying from thy inmost soul, “Do with me what seemeth good in Thy sight,”—and He will either remove the cross from off thee, or give thee the blessedness of realising the truth of these words, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

But perhaps thou art distressed by doubts and fears that God is angry with thee,—that in displeasure—not in love—He has laid thee low. Oftentimes thou art compelled to look backward, and the retrospect is gloomy,—a retrospect of ingratitude, forgetfulness, wandering,—of warnings unheeded, providences disregarded, mercies received unthankfully ; and the thought arises, “ For these transgressions I am chastened of the Lord ; they are too aggravated, too numerous, to be *forgiven*.”

“ *Forgiven !* ” “ My grace is sufficient for thee.” “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” “ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”

It is well to look backward—well to recall the past ; but not in a gloomy, despairing spirit—not as if by present or future suffering we could *atone* for sin. No, assuredly ; but to lead us “ to believe on Him who is able to save unto the uttermost,”—to “ believe, and be saved.” All our woe and misery could not atone for any one transgression ; and it is not by a painful counting up of duties undone, and sins committed, or by a resolving ever so earnestly to be more careful in all these things for the time to

come, that we can be saved. Salvation is *alone* in Christ. To Him we must go—to Him who, by His death, purchased for Himself the heirs of death, that they might become heirs of glory, and who sends sickness and trial to check and restrain us,—to make us bethink ourselves,—to bring us to Him, the only Saviour and Redeemer,—that we may be driven from the world, and from *ourselves*, to Him, and in Him find rest unto our souls.

Christian, look away then from self and sin—so vile and loathsome—to Jesus thy Brother, Saviour, God. He will not cast thee off, guilty as thou art; He will not fail to welcome thee; but He will say unto thee, “Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.” And if at any time thou art becoming faint and weary in the pilgrimage of life, oh, turn hopefully—turn without a misgiving to these words, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

But perhaps this is not thy case. You tell us, “I feel and acknowledge the infinity of God’s mercy in Christ. For years have I tasted that the Lord is gracious, and He has borne with me amid countless sins and shortcomings; but I

have an evil heart of unbelief, against whose suggestions I have continually to struggle, and whose temptings I sometimes feel myself unable to resist. No sooner have I gained a victory over some besetting sin, some evil temper, some worldly desire,—than another, equally powerful and seductive, presents itself, and from day to day I am engaged in a conflict, battling with some enemy, resisting some onset, and hardly able to keep my ground."

Reader,—yours is precisely the Christian's experience,—just what you were told to expect when you entered the narrow way,—and what you may continue to anticipate until you "enter the rest which remaineth for the people of God." But why be discouraged? He who has sustained you hitherto will be "with you" still. Your strength has often been fast failing, but you have not been overcome; why then should you dread that defeat awaits you? The very struggles you have maintained have added to your strength, and given you fresh vigour; the very fear of being vanquished has been a stimulus to new exertion, and is a sign that you "will finally prevail." Your enemies are strong and mighty,—yes, but not stronger than those whom

your blessed Saviour met and trampled under foot. He will nerve your arm afresh for the struggle. He will help you not only to maintain your ground, but to gain the victory ; and if ever you feel within you the risings of fear, or doubt, or despondency, oh, be cheered by these two precious assurances,—“ My grace is sufficient for thee ;” and again, “ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.”

Christian, whatever your trial, distress, or sorrow, have faith in the promise of your Saviour. All else may fail you, but “ His word standeth sure.” You will have your struggles and conflicts,—you will have dark and gloomy days and nights of storm and tempest ; but fear not—you will be carried safely through them all. You may be wounded and torn, and, covered with many scars,—bearing the marks of many a hard-fought battle,—with the dust of a weary journey on your garments,—with the sword not resting in its scabbard, but grasped as if for another onset,—you may be summoned from the battle-plain ; but what then ?

Away from conflict, from tumult, and strife.

—away from sin, temptation, and sorrow,—away, in that blessed home of peace and purity, where no fear shall again disturb, no foe again attack, no evil heart again lead astray,—you will “rest from all your labours.” The trumpet will no more summon to the battle; its last clarion-note will be “Victory!” and amid the glad hosannas of the heavenly hosts you will be welcomed as another conqueror,—a conqueror through Him whose grace was sufficient for thee, and whose strength was made perfect in weakness.

O most gracious Father, who hast invited all who feel their need of Thy grace to come unto Thee, have mercy upon me, for I am in trouble. I am deeply sensible that I am far from exercising that unreserved submission to Thy will which I ought to exercise. Help me, I beseech Thee, so to trust in Thy infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, that I may be able to say from my very heart, “Thy will be done.” Oh, teach me to be grateful for the manifold comforts allotted me, and support me graciously, that my soul be not cast down and disquieted within me. Keep me from all repining thoughts,

and do Thou make Thy grace at all times sufficient for me, and perfect Thy strength in my weakness. Let my soul be supported by faith, hope, and patience, under all the sufferings I may yet endure. Bless the means that are used, and make them effectual, if it be Thy good pleasure, for restoring me to health, that I may again praise Thee in the assembly of Thy saints. Make me willing to glorify Thee either by life or by death. Give me a simple dependence upon Thee, and enable me in all things to commit my way unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.—AMEN.

ISAIAH I. 10.

The way seems dark about me, overhead
The clouds have long since met in gloomy spread;
And when I look'd to see the day break through,
Cloud after cloud came up with volume new.

And in that shadow I have pass'd along,
Feeling myself grow weak as it grew strong;

Walking in doubt and searching for the way,
And often at a stand, as now to-day.

Lord, I am not sufficient for these things ;—
Give me the light that Thy sweet presence
 brings ;
Give me Thy grace, give me Thy constant
 strength ;
Lord, for my comfort now appear at length.

It may be that my way doth seem confused,
Because my heart of Thy way is afraid,—
Because my eyes have constantly refused
To see the only opening Thou hast made.

Because my will would cross some flow'ry plain
Where Thou hast thrown a hedge from side to
 side,
And turneth from the stony path of pain,
Its trouble, or its ease, not even tried.

If thus I try to force my way along,
The smoothest road encumber'd is to me
For were I as an angel swift or strong,
I could not go unless allow'd by Thee.

And now I pray Thee, Lord, to lead Thy child—
Poor, wretched wanderer from Thy grace and
love—

Whatever way Thou pleasest through the wild,
So it but take me to my home above.

PSALM I.XV. 2.

O Thou who hearest prayer
The God of power and might,
To seek Thy face be all our care,
Our whole delight.

O God of grace and love,
Regard us from Thy throne ;
Send down to us the heavenly dove,
Seal us Thine own !

We have no other trust
But Thy dear sacrifice ;
Our Hope, Thou Holy One and Just,
Do not despise.

Sinful, we plead Thy blood ;
Weak, we implore Thy power ;
Saviour, remember us for good
In danger's hour !

Come with Thy saving strength,
With healing virtue come ;
And let Thy guiding hand at length
Conduct us home ;
Till, saved from all annoy
Of earthly fear and strife,
We enter into endless joy,
And heavenly life.

XIV.

If the Lord Will.

1 JOHN v. 14, 15

“ . . . If we ask anything *according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

THERE is much to comfort us in these words. When health fails, when prosperity departs, or when our homes become the homes of mourning, we are prone, if we do not watch against the danger, to have our confidence in the power and efficacy of prayer weakened,—nay, sometimes, for a season, destroyed.

Perhaps we have offered up petitions for health, for plenty, for prosperity in the world, and instead of these things we have had sickness, adversity, and ever-increasing cares and troubles, and we have rashly supposed that our petitions were unheard.

Or, more painful still, perhaps we prayed for the assurance of forgiveness,—for a realising sense of God’s love in Christ,—for stronger faith,—for some precious spiritual blessing or comfort, which we imagined would insure our

happiness, peace, joy. But we continued still downcast, sad ; faith's grasp was feeble ; every wave that dashed against us seemed as if destined to hurl us against the rocks, and our cry of distress was lost amid the roar of the angry elements. Had not God forgotten to be gracious ? Was it not almost needless to continue praying ? Whose case was so urgent, whose danger so imminent, whose need so great as ours ? and yet our petitions had met with no response,—our entreaties for help had been unavailing ?

Such questions our unbelieving hearts *frequently* suggest, and they render necessary discipline more severe, trying, and long-continued, until we are brought to *honour* God by fully and implicitly *trusting* Him.

Three things ought to be ever kept in view with regard to prayer.

First, the range, the extent to which we may go in our petitions at a throne of grace, although vast and soul-satisfying, has yet a *boundary-line*. It is inscribed with these words —“ *According to His will.*”

We are at best but children,—wilful, erring children,—ignorant of what would prove a bless-

ing or a curse to us,—often anxious for those things which would prove hurtful, and slow to believe that a painful cross, a heavy affliction, is really the *best* thing God could send us. Our heavenly Father, who has graciously adopted us in Christ, and means to train us to obedience, self-denial, and submission, whilst, in the fulness of His love, offering the inestimable treasures of His grace, will only bestow upon us what He knows to be truly and lastingly beneficial to our souls. Therefore His promise of blessing is limited to things which are “according to His will.”

But some anxious, trembling one may say, “Surely, to implore the assurance of forgiveness,—to entreat the bestowal of pardon through the blood of Christ,—to ask for stronger faith, deeper love, livelier hope,—to offer such petitions as these,—must be ‘*according to His will.*’ ”

Yes, assuredly ; oh that we could ever doubt it, after all that God has done to convince us of His willingness to forgive, to pardon freely, and for ever ! See page after page of Holy Scripture bright with promises, invitations, entreaties ! See the loving Saviour, anxious to melt hard and stony hearts, weeping over the

impenitent, speaking tenderly to the guilty, the polluted, the vile,—giving up His precious life to ransom souls from destruction,—grasping, in His latest hour, a victim from the power of the enemy, to bear it as a trophy of the victory of redeeming love; and who shall dare say there is unwillingness on the part of God to forgive? Hear these words: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Listen to the Saviour’s description of His mission: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” And what was His language of bitter lamentation? “Ye will not come unto me that ye may be saved.”

Oh, there is no unwillingness on the part of

God ; but, alas ! there is *unbelief* on ours. We will not take God *at His word*,—we will persist in rearing barriers where there should be none, and in cherishing doubts and fears when our hearts might be filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

God has given us His word,—He bids us lay hold on His promises,—He invites us to be reconciled,—He urges us to accept forgiveness,—He condescends to entreat us in accents of winning tenderness, and sets before us His intense anxiety for our salvation in these words : “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We ourselves, then, are to blame, if we have not the assurance of forgiveness. We will not trust God. We refuse to credit His word. Of this we may be sure, that in praying for the grace of assurance we are doing right. Let us pray on and wrestle with God until there is within us *that* which we long for. So also in regard to faith, and love, and hope. If we have them not in their vigour, let us not rest satisfied until they are increased. In asking these

things, we *are* asking what is “*according to His will.*”

In many things we are *not*; and therefore something else is given: sickness, because it is better for us, in present circumstances, than unbroken health, is the answer to our prayer,—adversity, because, perhaps, we are trusting too much to our prosperity, is the gift bestowed. Friends are taken from us, and our hearts are wounded and stricken, because we set them as idols on the altar of our affections, where God must reign supreme. Our petitions were not “*according to His will,*” and He gave us what He saw to be needful.

Again, we must strive to realise the fact that our prayers *have* been really heard.

When once we have carefully examined the *nature* of our requests, and been persuaded that, as far as we know, they are “*according to His will,*” we should simply lay them before the Lord, assured that He not only hears us, but that “*we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*”

Not perhaps the very blessings we asked,—not health, plenty, peace, prosperity, freedom from sorrow, at the *very time* and in the *very*

way we sought. We must not presume to *dictate* to God. He hears and answers as a sovereign. But because the highest, choicest blessing which a Christian can desire, and for which he ought to pray most ardently, fervently, and perseveringly, is, to love what God loves, to choose what God chooses, to will what God wills,—because this ought ever to be the uppermost petition on his heart,—he may be sure that, if he ask it, he will receive it, and all the other blessings he prayed for, *up to the extent* when their bestowal would hinder the progress of the life of God in the soul. Christian, rest assured your cry has been heard; be not disquieted and cast down because you have not received precisely the blessing you desired. It was not good for you. You thought it would render you happy; but it would have had no such virtue. That only can make you really happy which has the stamp of God's approval on it, and which is "according to His will." Take what He has sent, be it sickness, loss of friends, loss of property; take it, as what your heavenly Father saw to be needful, and pray that He would, by His Holy Spirit, sanctify it to you,—that it may increase your trust in

Him, and render you more submissive to His will.

Lastly, we must ever strive to cherish the conviction that earnest, persevering prayer is not merely a privilege and duty, but that it is, through our Lord Jesus Christ, prevalent with God, and is accomplishing its purpose.

When we fail to see the blessing come down which we earnestly prayed for, or when something very different is given us, we are apt to yield to unbelief; and as, perhaps, trial after trial happens, we say with one of old, "All these things are against me."

Christian, does the child, when gazing on an intricate piece of mechanism, understand how wheel fits into wheel, how the one is dependent on the other, and how the very smallest is necessary to accomplish the final result?

Neither can you understand how the various trials and crosses in thy life are all working together,—combining in conformity with the will of God in carrying on to its accomplishment the sanctification of thy nature,—until at length thou art fitted for a holier, purer dwelling-place with thy Father and thy God.

Remember, "what thou knowest not now

thou shalt know hereafter," and let this satisfy thee. A time will yet come when, if faithful unto death, thou wilt acknowledge with a grateful heart that thy prayers have been fully answered, that everything from God was given in deepest love, and that "with Christ Jesus He freely gave you all things." Despond not, even though sorrow upon sorrow be thy portion, and the heavy billows of affliction seem ceaselessly to roll over thee. Fix the eye of faith on the painless home of light and love, and be cheered by the thought that, following the Saviour close in sorrow here, thou shalt be privileged to follow Him close in bliss hereafter.

Deem it not a "strange thing" that *trial* has happened unto thee. Strange it would have been, if thou hadst only joy where thy Saviour had so much sorrow,—if thou hadst a quiet resting-place where He could find no spot whereon to rest His wearied head,—if the world had offered thee a place of calm and sweet repose, when it denied a shelter to thy suffering, mournful Lord! No, Christian; not here, not here, canst thou look for repose, or rest, or freedom from trial, but in that blessed home of tranquillity and joy, where the count-

less ages of eternity, as they roll on, shall never behold the shedding of one single tear, or catch the echo of one faintest sigh.

Be this your stay, and let it gladden your every onward step—

“Who loves the cross, and Him who on it died,
In every cloud sees Jesus by his side.”

O God, our heavenly Father, grant me grace to submit to Thy holy will. Thou knowest what discipline I need. Thou seest, O Lord, how much of evil there is in my heart,—what unbelief, and fear, and folly,—and Thou knowest what is needful to remove them. I would desire, good Lord, humbly to acquiesce in Thy doings, believing that Thou art chastening me for my profit. I would bear Thy rod, not merely because I cannot resist it, but because I love and trust Thee. I would sweetly acquiesce and rest in Thy will, as well as bow beneath it, and would say, “Good is the word of the Lord.” I would take gratefully the blessings Thou art pleased to send, for I am not worthy of the least of them. And when Thou deniest my petition, and withholdest what I ask, oh, strengthen me by Thy grace to wait Thy pleasure, and still to

trust Thee, assured that the time will come when I shall bless Thee even for unanswered prayers, for trials, and afflictions, and sorrows, which I would fain have had removed, but which, blessed be God, were made the means of drawing me nearer to Thee.

Hear me, O Lord, and grant me Thy blessing, for my dear Redeemer's sake.—AMEN.

PSALM XXV. 4.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be ;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough,
It will be still the best ;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot ;
I would not if I might ;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine ; so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else surely I shall stray.

Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem ;
Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness, or my health ;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty, or wealth.

Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things, or great or small ;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom, and my All.

BONAR.

XV.

The Swelling of Jordan.

JER. xii. 5.

“How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

No Scripture reader can have failed to notice that the journeyings of the children of Israel are typical of the Christian's pilgrimage, and the promised rest in Canaan of the Christian's eternal home. Their deliverance from Egypt, their march through the desert, their passage over Jordan, their abode in Canaan—are all points of resemblance, tracing out, as it were, the journey from this world of sin and sorrow to “the rest which remaineth for the people of God.”

In the words before us one interesting point of history is referred to, which may serve to illustrate an important and solemn stage in the Christian's pilgrimage—viz., *the passage over Jordan*. Let us meditate for a little on this marvellous event; and may God, by His Holy Spirit, enable us to derive comfort from the thoughts suggested regarding our heavenly home!

The Jordan lay between the Israelites and the promised land. Doubtless, as they stood upon its banks, wistfully gazing across its swelling waves, their hearts were filled with gloom and terror. Three days they rested within sight of the flowing stream ; no promise—no assurance of help was vouchsafed. Dark and cold, the river rolled on its course, and ever as the waves rose and heaved and broke at their feet, the question would arise in many a sinking heart, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan ?” It was only when summoned to cross—only when the hour for their departure had come—that Joshua unfolded to them the wondrous way in which the Lord intended to guide and conduct them over. “It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above ; and they shall stand upon an heap.”

As the Jordan lay between the Israelites and Canaan, so *death* lies between the Christian and his eternal home. *It* is oftentimes an object of terror even to the holiest and the best. We *do*

not love death ; we fear the gloomy passage ; our faithless hearts shrink at the prospect of breasting the foaming flood. We would fain tarry on the banks of the stream, unable to find an answer to the inquiry, " How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan ? " Christian, be of good courage ; the answer will come in God's good time. These fears will then vanish, and, like Israel of old, you will safely and triumphantly cross the rapid, rising flood.

Mark some of the incidents connected with *their* wondrous passage. *The ark of the covenant was with them* ; upborne on the shoulders of the priests, it went before, and led the march of the advancing hosts. So is it with the Christian : Christ, the Ark of the Covenant, is present in the hour of his departure. At *His* bidding the dark waters will divide,—they will rise up on either side, and hold back every onward-flowing billow ; until, at length, the once timid, trembling, fearful believer, stands, with a joyful and triumphant heart, upon Immanuel's blissful shore. Yes, believer ; never has a solitary pilgrim crossed the Jordan unattended by the presence of Jesus. He watches each disciple with intensest interest. He keeps His eye not

only on the busy scenes of life, but also on the secret mysteries of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Sweet, comforting thought! Fear not to go down with Him into the dark river; it may prove boisterous for a season,—its waters may be cold and chilling at their approach,—the waves may threaten to drown you; but fear not, He will be with you: "He will hold you by your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not." Whatever weakness you may be called to pass through, He will be "the strength of your heart;" the Almighty Lord will be with you, and strengthen you,—you will see His smile,—you will hear His voice,—you will feel His hand, and His conscious presence will enfold you as you pass.

We are further told that *all the people passed clean over*. None were left behind—none were swept away by the swelling of Jordan. Neither shall any of God's true Israel be lost in death's devouring flood. Whatever fears may have distressed them,—whatever doubts may have gathered round them as they neared the brink of the stream,—they shall pass over in safety, because their High Priest is with them, and He

has promised to conduct them to the heavenly Canaan.

Sick one, dear to Christ! art thou afraid of death?—art thou inquiring with an anxious heart, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” It is not strange to be thus alarmed; others have experienced the same painful feeling. It is only through *strong* faith in the promises of God, and hope in the infinite merits of our Redeemer, that we *can* look on death, and overcome those terrors which the most perfect of mortals must feel at putting off mortality. You need not blame yourself if you cannot feel *joy* in quitting this world. Human nature cannot be perfected in this life; it is well if you are resigned to the will of God, without murmuring or repining, when He is pleased to call for you. Death is to the best an awful summons, and human nature turns from the gloomy passage. It is also a mournful thought to be separated from those whom we love most dearly,—to leave them amid the sorrows of a sinful world,—to leave them struggling with all the difficulties, the hardships, and the dangers that attend a Christian in his journey through the wilderness,—and no more to see their faces—no more to

hear their voices till they too shall have passed through the river of death.

But surely, Christian, you may be comforted by the thought, that a safe and triumphant passage is insured to the weakest of Christ's followers. "They shall never perish." This is the assurance of "the faithful Promiser." It is not life, and it is not death, which shall separate you from your Saviour-God. Because *He* lives, ye shall live also; *where* He is, there shall ye be also. Fear not the swelling tide. All is in the Lord's hands, and He will divide the foaming billows, and take you dry-shod over, and not a heaving, not an undulation of the cold waters shall chill the warmth, or ruffle the calmness of your breast. Let this be the language of your soul, "Saviour-God, my trust is in Thee. I will cleave to Thee closer and closer. As the water deepens, I will plant my foot of faith firmer and firmer upon the Rock, until I find myself in glory."

Yes, believer, *in glory*,—away from doubts and fears and anxieties,—away from besetting sins,—away from pain and weariness and toil,—with Him whom your soul loves,—with Him who gave His life's blood to redeem you,—with

Him who led you *on* your earthly pilgrimage,—with Him who brought you to the brink of Jordan's stream, and gave you faint glimpses of the heavenly Canaan,—with Him who, when the billows began to heave and swell on either side, and your heart trembled with fear, whispered these words, “Fear not, I am still with thee. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the floods, they shall not overflow. I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Heavenly Father, I beseech Thee, grant that when the time of my departure shall come, I may be found prepared. May I be enabled to feel that, though my heart and my flesh fail, yet that Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. O blessed Jesus! who didst go to prepare a place for Thine own people in Thy Father's house,—Thou who hast strengthened and supported many a dying Christian while amid the swellings of Jordan, support and uphold me. Let not my faith fail; let not my hope waver. Enable me to look forward to the solemn hour of my departure with meek and humble confidence, trusting only in the merits

of my gracious Lord and Saviour, and relying so much on His promised grace, that the last hours of my life may be those of peace, and hope, and joy. O gracious God, pardon and accept me for the sake of Jesus Christ.—AMEN.

“My times are in thy hand.”—Ps. xxxi. 15.

Our times are in Thy hand ;
 O God, we wish them there ;
 Our life, our friends, our souls, we leave
 Entirely to Thy care.

Our times are in Thy hand,
 Whatever they may be—
 Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
 As best may seem to Thee.

Our times are in Thy hand ;
 Why should we doubt or fear ?
 A Father's hand will never cause
 His child a needless tear.

Our times are in Thy hand,
 Jesus the Crucified !
 The hand our many sins have pierced
 Is now our guard and guide.

Our times are in Thy hand ;
We'll always trust in Thee,
Till we have left this weary land,
And all Thy glory see.

" O death, where is thy sting ?"—1 COR. xv. 55.

Why that sigh, my soul, at parting
From a world so cold as this ?
Why those silent tear-drops starting,
Standing at the gates of bliss ?
Soon the struggle shall be ended,
Jordan's swellings soon be past,
And these fears—a while suspended—
Lose themselves in heaven at last.

What is death ?—to sleep in Jesus,
When this weary strife is o'er ;
And to sorrows, sins, diseases,
Never to awaken more !
Safe from every care and anguish,
Leaning on the Saviour's breast—
" Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest ! "

‘ They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.’—Ps. cxxvi. 5.

Brief life is here our portion,
 Brief sorrow, short-lived care ;
 The life that knows no ending—
 The tearless life is *there*.

O happy retribution,
 Short toil, eternal rest !
 For mortals, and for sinners,
 A mansion with the blest !

And now we fight the battle,
 And then we wear the crown
 Of full and everlasting
 And passionless renown.

’Midst power that knows no limit,
 And wisdom free from bound,
 The beatific vision
 Shall glad the saints around.

There God, our King and portion,
 In fulness of His grace,
 Shall we behold for ever,
 And worship face to face !

HYMNAL.

My task is o'er, my work is done,
And spent the weary day;
I've fought the fight—the battle's won,
And I must haste away;
Henceforth there is laid up for me
A crown, through all eternity!

A crown by hands eternal wove,
Meet for a child of God—
Gemm'd with the jewels of His love,
And purchased by His blood:
Which human hands could ne'er have
wrought,
And human merit ne'er have bought.

Farewell the cross 'neath which so long
I've watch'd and fought below;
And welcome now the harp and song
That wait me where I go;
Yet, oh, that cross must still be dear,
Though borne through many a sorrow
here!

And oft throughout eternity,
'Mid all that's bright and blest,

Its victory my joy shall be,
And I will love it best ;
For 'twas through Him who died thereon
My fight was fought—my battle won !

PARISH MUSINGS.

XVI.

Bearing Fruit.

JOHN xv. 8.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

IN regard to the sphere of Christian duty and usefulness, there is no mistake we more frequently commit, than in supposing, when God is pleased to lay His chastening hand on one of His children, that he “is laid aside,”—removed from his “post,” and, for the time, nearly altogether useless and unprofitable.

We can at once believe in the exertion, the energy, and endurance of the *missionary* who goes forth to heathen lands, that, amid suffering, privation, and toil, he may disseminate the truth as it is in Jesus, and advance the cause and kingdom of his Redeemer. We give our hearty admiration to the man who devotes himself to some scheme of benevolence,—who labours on year after year in furthering the object on which his heart is set. We accord our willing tribute of praise to him who seeks to ameliorate the condition of the poor,—to instruct and reclaim the ignorant and wretched

dwellers in our lanes and alleys,—or to gather in the wandering outcasts on our streets to the house of God, where they may hear of pardon and peace through the precious blood of Christ.

These, and such as these, are held, and worthily held, in admiration. Their names are honoured, and become as “household words.” But how many of God’s dear children are bearing heavier burdens, discharging more painful duties, and displaying more vigorous faith, in the retirement of private life, or in the chamber of sickness and trial. God is “glorified” as well in *suffering* as in *doing*,—in the patient *endurance*, as well as in the vigorous *performance* of His will. There is *even* a *stronger* testimony given to the power and efficacy of Christ’s religion in the uncomplaining life of some tried and suffering disciple, than in the bold and courageous efforts of him who, against rage and opposition, carries the words of the everlasting gospel from shore to shore,—who dreads not the burning sands of the desert, or the frozen mountains of the north,—but with ever-increasing energy presses on, that he may plant the Rose of Sharon in the

desert wild, and rear the standard of the cross amid savage and heathen tribes. The former may tread his path of suffering unnoticed and uncheered by man, whilst the latter may be animated to almost superhuman efforts by the inspiring plaudits of thousands who are watching his progress. But other eyes are fixed upon the solitary pilgrim, whose every step in his heavenward journey is marked with blood,—who, in the loneliness of the midnight hour, when sleep refuses to seal up his eyelids, “communes with his own heart upon his bed, and *is still.*” Angels, we believe, from the heights of glory, and ransomed spirits, sent to minister to the heirs of salvation, circle around that solitary one, and rejoice in being commissioned to bear glad tidings—tidings of peace, and comfort, and hope, and joy—to that troubled and wearied disciple.

But while all this is true, alas! is it not also true that *we* have failed in the past thus to glorify our heavenly Father by bearing “much fruit?” How little have we brought forth compared with what we might have done! If we look backward on the days and years that are gone,—and on the various dealings of God in

providence and grace, may we not say “ we are unprofitable servants ? ”

What fruit did we bear whilst enjoying the means of grace and listening to the gracious invitations and promises of the gospel ? Did we gladly receive them into our hearts and embrace the overtures of mercy ? Did we, as weary and heavy-laden sinners lay the burden of our sins at the foot of the Cross,—did we, as faint and thirsty travellers joyfully welcome and partake of the living water ? Or rather, did we not turn away from the door opened to admit us,—from the Saviour longing to make us His own, and from the Spirit whose influences were promised to purify, uphold, and strengthen us ? Perhaps, with some of us, it was only after years of obstinacy and unbelief,—years of privilege, long-suffering, and forbearance, on the part of God, that our hearts were softened, our wills subdued, and the old man crucified within us. And these years, in which we might have lived *for* God and not *for* the world,—in which we might have enjoyed fellowship and communion with Jesus—in which we might have put forth our energies for the advancement of truth and holiness,—all

have been wasted and have born no fruit to the glory of God.

Has it been otherwise with us under the chastening hand of our heavenly Father? In love to our souls He robbed us of some cherished idol, and gave us to drink the cup of sorrow. That heart which He had claimed for Himself and on whose throne He would permit no rival, had become estranged,—its tendrils had entwined themselves around some earthly prop, and He cut it down with His own loving, faithful hand, in order that they might grow up, and cling to Him alone for support. In such an hour did we humbly and submissively acquiesce in the will of God?—did we acknowledge that “in very faithfulness” He had afflicted us, and pray that He would sanctify our trial? Or rather, did we give way to impatience, despondency, and gloom—rebellious against our Father’s will—refusing to be comforted, and saying in bitterness of spirit, “all these things are against me?” Ah, if such has been our conduct, how have we failed to “glorify” God,—how miserable the return for all His grace and goodness and mercy?

So likewise in the time of personal sickness and infirmity. God has withdrawn us from the world, that, in the solitariness of the sick-room, we may listen undisturbed to His voice, and amid pain, suffering, and distress, still exercise an unfaltering faith in His love,—and in “patience possess our souls.” He would have us trust Him *then* as firmly as in the day of health,—He would have us believe *then* that He seeks our well-being, as heartily and truly as when our souls were filled with gladness, and we could not but extol His bounty and love. Have we done this? Have we said to ourselves, “Good is the will of the Lord,—this sickness was needed,—He is chastening me for my profit, He is calling me to set my affections on things above, not on things on the earth. In health, how slow the progress I was making heavenward!—how seldom were my thoughts directed towards heaven and eternity!—how little did I know of conformity to the sufferings of Christ, and of having the same mind in me. Now, O my Father, since Thou hast called me to the endurance of pain and suffering, strengthen me to submit without murmuring or impatience. Give me to realise the mercy of Thy dispensa-

tions, and the advantages of a bed of sickness. Help me to improve the means which Thou art employing for turning my thoughts towards Thee. Oh ! grant me grace to lay hold on those promises which are set before me, and now that earthly health and strength have failed, may I place more simple and entire confidence in Thee. Keep me from all repining thoughts, and in remembrance of Thy past loving-kindness, help me now to trust in Thy goodness, and to submit to Thy will." Where such thoughts have occupied,—where such prayers have risen from the heart, there will assuredly be "fruit" to the glory of God. There will be the fruit of holy living,—of more unreserved consecration to the service of Christ,—of a deeper devotion,—a more heartfelt penitence,—a more humble submission. The time of sickness will be the means of strengthening faith,—inflaming love, and increasing zeal. It will teach the believer the true end he should have in life,—to glorify God that he may enjoy Him for ever. And not only will his own soul prosper and be in health, but his trust, and hope, and confidence in God, under the pressure of sickness, will speak forcibly to those around him. There will be a silent yet

powerful eloquence in his weakness and infirmity, and it may be his blessed privilege to sow the seeds of goodness, of love to God and Christ, of holiness and happiness, in the hearts of many who, in the the great day, shall be to him “a joy and crown of rejoicing.”

Reader! are you striving to “glorify” your Father in heaven by “bearing much fruit?” You may imagine, that as day by day glides tranquilly on,—unmarked by vicissitude, and unruffled by the storm, there is scarcely any opportunity afforded you. It is not so. Every believer has some way in which he may “bear fruit” to the glory of God. Are you prosperous? You may “bear the fruit” of gratitude and praise. Are you surrounded by loving friends, cheered and gladdened by the intercourse of kindly hearts? You may “bear the fruit” of thankfulness to Him, who has the hearts of all men in His hands. Do you occupy a station of honour and responsibility? You may “bear fruit” by looking ever to God for guidance and direction,—for strength to discharge your duties faithfully, and grace to bear your honours humbly.

But few, if any there are, who are without

daily cares and crosses,—in enduring which there is need for patience and self-denial. Herein, too, God may be glorified. Do you suffer from coldness or neglect? Manifest the fruit of forgiveness. Are you exposed to attacks from the tongue of envy or malice? Return not railing for railing, but leave it with God to maintain your cause. Have you suffered from injustice and oppression? Make your complaint to Him who will defend the right, and ask His counsel and guidance. Whatever be your daily cross or trial,—whatever the fear which disturbs,—the danger which threatens,—the care which harasses,—or the grief which weighs down the spirit, let your aim and desire ever be, to “glorify” your heavenly Father,—whether by doing or by suffering. Remember that the fruit which you have to bear, is the fruit of the spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”—even in sickness, affliction, and trouble doing this, “in your patience possessing your souls”—“forasmuch as ye know that neither labour nor sorrow can be

in vain in the Lord." "*In everything*, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Thus living, a daily suppliant at Mercy's gate, you will obtain grace equal to your day,—grace to honour your Divine Master,—grace to manifest the power of a living faith,—grace to endure as seeing Him who is invisible,—grace to be faithful unto death, and, through the merits of Christ, to receive the crown of life.

“Who would be God’s, must trust, not see,
Not murmur, fear, demand:
Must *wholly* by Him guided be,
Lost in that loving Hand:
Must turn where’er He leads, nor say,
‘Whither, oh, whither, points the way?’”

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who dost not willingly afflict the children of men, but dost rebuke and chasten those whom Thou lovest, look down upon me, Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me, for

Christ's sake. Enable me, O God, amid all my pains and sufferings, to recognise Thy fatherly hand, and to feel assured that Thou wilt make them means of good, and sources of blessing to my soul. I acknowledge, O God, that I have grievously sinned against Thee, and merit only Thy hot displeasure. But for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a sacrifice for sin, and who now pleads at Thy right hand, do Thou, Lord God, have mercy upon me, and forgive all mine iniquities.

And grant, heavenly Father, if it please Thee, that both my soul may be healed of the dreadful malady of sin, and my body renewed with health, that I may devote the life Thou sparest to Thy service, and to the good of my fellow-creatures.

Whatever Thou art pleased to give or withhold, oh, pour upon me the rich gift of Thy Holy Spirit! Through His indwelling may I be enabled to bring forth fruit to Thy glory. Make me patient, humble, and resigned. Grant that no pain may ever tempt me to murmur, or to doubt Thy fatherly goodness. Assist me, O God, to cherish penitent, believing, and serious

thoughts and affections, and such meekness and patience as my Divine Master manifested whilst He was a sufferer on earth. Help me, by Thy Holy Spirit, so to meditate on Thy mercies in Christ Jesus, that, in the midst of all my weariness and pains, Thy comforts may refresh my soul !

Blessed Jesus, be Thou my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Thou, O merciful Lord, hast said that in all our afflictions Thou art afflicted. May I realise Thy sympathy with me. May the remembrance of Thy sufferings check every murmur, and soothe every pain. Lord, enable me, whether in sickness or in health, to glorify Thy holy name. Do with me what is good in Thy sight. Let patience have her perfect work. If this sickness be unto death, oh, prepare me for it, that I may depart only to be with Thee. Whether in life or in death, may I still live in Thy presence. And to Thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all glory and praise, world without end!—AMEN.

THE HARVEST HOME.

From the far-off fields of earthly toil,
A goodly host they come,
And sounds of music are on the air,—
'Tis the song of the "Harvest Home."
The weariness and the weeping,—
The darkness has all pass'd by,
And a glorious Sun has risen,
The Sun of eternity !

We've seen those faces in days of yore,
When the dust was on their brow,
And the scalding tear upon their cheek—
Let us look on the labourers now !
We think of the life-long sorrow,
And the wilderness-days of care ;
We try to trace the tear-drops,
But no furrows of grief are there.

There's a mystery of soul-chasten'd joy,
Lit up with sunlight hues ;
Like morning flowers, most beautiful
When wet with midnight dews.

There are depths of earnest meaning
In each true and trustful gaze,
Telling of wondrous lessons
Learnt in their pilgrim-days,

And a conscious confidence of bliss.
That shall never again remove,—
All the faith and hope of journeying years
Gather'd up in that look of love.
The long waiting days are over,
They've received their wages now ;
For they've gazed upon their Master,
And His name is on their brow.

They've seen the safely-garner'd sheaves,
And the song has been passing sweet
Which welcomed the last in-coming one,
Laid down at the Saviour's feet.
Ah ! well does His heart remember,
As those notes of praise sweep by,
The yearning, plaintive music
Of earth's sadder minstrelsy.

And well does He know each chequer'd tale,
As He looks on the joyous band,—
All the lights and shadows that cross'd their path
In the distant pilgrim-land !

The heart's unspoken anguish,
The bitter sighs and tears,
The long, long hours of watching,
The changeful hopes and fears.

One had climb'd the rugged mountain-side,
'Twas a bleak and wintry day,
The tempest had scatter'd his precious seed,
And he wept as he turn'd away.
But a stranger-hand had water'd
That seed on a distant shore,
And the labourers now are meeting
Who had never met before.

And one,—he had toil'd amid burning sands,
When the scorching sun was high ;
He had grasp'd the plough with a fever'd hand,
And then laid him down to die:
But another, and yet another,
Had fill'd that deserted field,
Nor vainly the seed they scatter'd
Where a brother's hand had till'd.

Some with eager step went boldly forth,
Broadcasting over the land,
Some water'd the scarcely budding blade
With a tender and gentle hand.

There's one,—her young life was blighted
By the withering touch of woe ;
Her days were sad and lonely,
And she never went forth to sow.

But there rose from her lowly couch of pain
The fervent, pleading prayer ;
She looks on many a radiant brow,
And she reads the answer there !
Yes ! sowers and reapers are meeting,
A goodly host they come !
Will you join the echoing chorus ?—
'Tis the song of the " Harvest Home ! "

C. P.

XVII.

Christian Joy.

JOHN xvi. 22.

“Your joy no man taketh from you.”

THESE precious words were uttered by our blessed Saviour at a most eventful period of His history. It was the night of His betrayal. For the eighth time He had repeated the story of His coming sufferings. With deep and affecting solemnity, He had instituted the memorial of His death and passion; and, slowly and sadly, He drew up the curtain which was to reveal to the sorrowing disciples the things which were soon to come upon them.

Sorrow and anxiety filled the hearts of all in that lonely upper room. He that had “received the sop” had gone out, and was already communing with the Saviour’s murderers; for it was at length “their hour and the power of darkness.” But even then, when the tide of anticipated suffering and sorrow was rushing in upon His own soul—when He was hemmed in on every side by the malice of His enemies—and there was now only the brook Cedron be-

tween Him and the awful anguish of Gethsemane—our Lord thought not of Himself, but of those trembling followers whom He was so soon to leave in a dark and desolate world, full of sorrows, perplexities, and cares.

He comforts them by many gracious promises, and bids them be of good cheer. It must needs be that He should now depart. The Holy Ghost, in mysterious silence, awaited the signal of His return in the courts of heaven, and must await. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.”

And whilst predicting their future sufferings, He promises a season of great and permanent joy. “Now, therefore,” He says, “ye have sorrow”—the season of suffering to you is at hand; ye shall have sorrow, deep sorrow, during the short period of your not seeing Me; “but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

Christian, see in all this the love, the tenderness, the care of Jesus! We might have expected that His own anticipated sorrows would *alone*, at such a time, have occupied His mind—that the dark vista through which He was to

pass would have concentrated His every thought, and served to exclude all efforts to soothe or mitigate the sorrows of others. But no! Fully aware of the tremendous responsibilities of His situation—feeling the weight of the load laid upon Him, the bitterness of the cup given Him to drink—and anticipating, as certain and just at hand, a heavier pressure and a bitterer draught—He still evinced as deep an interest in the anxieties and perplexities, in the fears and sorrows of the disciples, as if He himself had not been a sufferer.

He knew how they were troubled, and what anxious, desponding, despairing thoughts were arising in their minds, and He could not but be “touched with a feeling of their infirmities.” The weight of anguish which overwhelmed *His* soul, no being in the wide universe could bear along with Him. He could not have the alleviation of human sympathy. He must tread the wine-press alone. He must encounter the enemy, bear his assaults, and overcome alone. They could not enter into His sorrows, or aid Him in the coming struggle; but He—the generous, self-denying, magnanimous One—could fully enter into theirs. There was room in His

large heart for their sorrows, as well as His own. He feels their griefs as if they were His own, and kindly comforts those who, He knew, were about to desert Him in the hour of His deepest sorrow.

And soon was the gracious promise *made good* in the experience of the disciples. The Saviour did, indeed, come to *see them again*, and their hearts poured themselves out in one gush, "The Lord is risen indeed," as if all was summed up in that. *Then* their only difficulty was that their hearts were only too narrow for the greatness of their *joy*—they "believed not for joy and wonder;" and this "joy no man could take from them."

All the malice of their enemies,—all the cruelties and sufferings they might have to bear,—all the pains and persecutions which lay before them in the journey of life, could not rob them of that inward joy which was the true treasure of their hearts. The Saviour—true, loving, faithful—was, though unseen, ever nigh to them. In the gloom of the prisoner's cell, or in the solitariness of the desert,—when arraigned before an unrighteous tribunal, or amid the flames of martyrdom, they had Him

ever by their side—cheering, comforting, animating them by His own Spirit. As days and years rolled on,—as they entered into closer and more intimate communion with their Lord,—revealing to Him their cares and sorrows,—drinking in more largely of His grace and spirit,—sheltering themselves from the rude blasts of persecution and the fury of their enemies, in His loving bosom,—they realised this *joy* more and more, they “rejoiced, inasmuch as they were partakers of Christ’s sufferings; knowing that when His glory shall be revealed, they shall be glad also with exceeding joy.”

Hear the language of the apostle: “I am filled with comfort. I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.” “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” “And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” “Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?”

Christian ! the same promise is made to you, and may be realised in your experience ; for it was given by the Saviour not only to the first apostles, but to all “ who should believe on Him through their word.”

“ I will see you again,” is the assurance of Jesus to every troubled disciple. When the consciousness of guilt and wrong-doing burdens the soul, and causes it to tremble and be afraid, then does the vision of Jesus, as the sin-offering,—the Lamb of God,—the Burden-bearer,—the sympathising High-priest, and all-prevailing Intercessor, impart *peace* and *joy*. The Christian is enabled—even when conscious of his own sinfulness—to look by faith to Him who “ bore our sins in His own body on the tree,”—who bore, in His own death, the punishment that would have crushed us to all eternity, and he can take up the language of the apostle, “ Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” There is the happy, peaceful consciousness of sin pardoned,—guilt blotted,—iniquity done away,—through the precious blood of Christ ; and filled with a *joy* with which a stranger intermeddleth not, “ the believer starts afresh in the journey of life,—having, like the fabled

pilgrim dropped his burden at the foot of the cross."

Nor is this all. The sense of pardon and acceptance through the blood and righteousness of Christ, may well fill the heart with *joy*; but still there remain the seeds of evil, the sources of disquiet in the best of God's children. All our doings are defiled with sin and imperfection, —the very holiest act we perform has need to be atoned for by the atoning blood of Christ, ere it can find acceptance with God.

And it is only by daily walking with Jesus, —looking ever to Him for grace and strength, —leaning ever on His arm, and relying ever on His aid, that we can hope to do what is right or well-pleasing in the sight of God, or to have in our own hearts "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." But oh! how comforting, how animating the thought that in the exercise of a living faith, we may have the Saviour ever with us,—yea, abiding in our hearts—nearer, closer to us than the dearest earthly friend,—that thus we may see Him in our joys and sorrows,—our duties and trials,—in the means of grace and in His living

word,—that we may at any moment lift up the burdened heart to Him, and find relief and solace,—that we may bring to Him our crosses and temptations,—our cares and anxieties, and feel assured that He will sympathise with us and send relief:—

“ Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother’s eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.”

In all this, there is to the Christian an element of joy—true, real, spiritual joy—a joy which supports him in many a heavy trial—which enables him to see sunshine where others can see nothing but blackness, and makes him lose his sorrows when he knows that “all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose.” He feels that he has indeed a Saviour suited to his every want,—his utmost need,—a Saviour in whom are blended every tender trait of character—every loving and gentle disposition he can desire as a weak and feeble pilgrim, travelling amidst dangers, and diffi-

culties, and sorrows, to the eternal world. He sees in Christ Jesus his Lord and Saviour, a holiness which will assuredly render him holy,—a justice which will suffer no wrong to be perpetrated, or at least, in the end, to triumph,—a strength which can bear all his burdens,—a wisdom that can guide him in every perplexity,—a patience which his many errors and failings will not exhaust,—a tenderness which will soothe his heaviest grief,—a kindness which countless blessings have only proved and confirmed,—a love enduring as eternity.

We do not indeed say that this joy,—precious, comforting, sustaining as it is, is a perfect joy: there is often a melancholy minor beside the loudest song of praise,—a sigh and a tear even in moments of rejoicing. Man could not in this world bear to have “fulness of joy.” The bright sunshine would be too much for him,—the unchecked pathway retard his progress heavenward,—he would be tempted to forget his God,—to linger by the way in dreamy indolence,—and to abide in the wilderness, instead of “coming up” from it, “leaning on the arm of the Beloved.” And, therefore, sorrows are mingled in our cup of joy, times of sore trouble and

anguish succeed our seasons of gladness, and the Saviour's comforting presence is withdrawn, that we may more ardently long for His return. Then the language of our souls is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! Behold I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." How often, in such an hour, has the Saviour revealed Himself to His longing and disconsolate disciples! how often, when least expected, has He come to them again, saying as of old "Peace be unto you!"—and, clinging to Him as if with the ardour of a newly inspired affection,—sheltering themselves beneath the shadow of His wings, they have "rejoiced with an exceeding joy."

Sick one, dear to Christ! is thy heart full of fear and trembling? Instead of *joy*, art thou filled with grief? Oh, look to Christ by the eye of faith,—see Him as still near to thee,—still the portion of thy soul,—still "waiting to be gracious," thy loving, faithful, and compassionate Redeemer; and "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Draw near

to Him in sweet and close communion, lift up your burdened heart to Him in believing prayer, and you will soon find that “in His presence is fulness of *joy*,”—that He “will not leave you comfortless, but will come to you,”—that He can satisfy every desire, every want, every aspiration, and raise, and refine, and purify them even in satisfying them.

Reader ! all other *joy* is transitory, only the *joy* of the Christian can remain. All other is but for a season ; and even here, when least expected, the golden cup of worldly delight may be dashed in pieces from the lips ; but this is a treasure which none can take away. You may be deprived of worldly comforts,—you may be severed from those whom your hearts hold most dear,—you may lose health, honour, fame, but this promised blessing, this “joy and peace in believing,” is beyond the reach of men or evil spirits. In the world through which you are passing you must expect tribulation,—*Ye now, therefore, may have sorrow* ; you must lay your account with many grounds of mourning, many sources of disquietude. But let not your faith fail—still “hope in the Lord.” His eye is upon you when encompassed by fears, and

doubts, and conflict, and ready to despair. His eye is upon you when, tost upon affliction's billows, you tremble lest the soul's anchor lose its resting-place, and her hopes be overwhelmed in ruin. And, if you look to Him by faith, He will instantly be by your side,—He will “see you again” in the day of your trial, and your heart shall rejoice. Oh, remember He has given this promise to every disciple, and He is too faithful ever to break His promise—“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.”

And, Christian, there is an hour coming when this *joy* will be unspeakably precious,—an hour when nothing else can avail to uphold and comfort the soul,—an hour, at the prospect of which humanity starts back, and heart and flesh fail,—when an irresistible hand will tear from us all that is earthly, and deprive us of every worldly honour, joy, and consolation. The Saviour “will see you again,” when you draw near to the grave, and will receive your departing spirit to Himself. Oh, well may the sight of Jesus

“rejoice the heart” of the believer, and lead him to say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and staff they comfort me.” “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” I know what joy His presence has imparted already ; I have looked to Him, and He has given me light, peace, joy, hope, salvation. I have leant upon Him and He has supported and strengthened me. I know by experience the power of His arm,—the depth of His sympathy,—the faithfulness of His love. I know what He will do, by what He has done, and by what He has promised to do. He will support me in crossing the swelling of Jordan, and plant my feet on the shores of immortal bliss and glory.

“Death no terrific foe appears ;
An angel’s lovely form he wears ;
A friendly messenger he proves
To every soul whom Jesus loves.”

The end of life’s journey is not the end of the Christian’s joy. No ; his experience here is

but a foretaste of those nobler and more exalted joys,—those purer and more permanent delights reserved for him at God's right hand. There will he behold the Saviour without an intervening cloud,—there will he be admitted to His full and immediate presence, and “be for ever with the Lord.” And, oh, if even here the sight of Jesus,—the presence of Jesus, so fills the heart with joy, so quickens our faith and enkindles our love, how great, how soul-satisfying will our joy be, when we shall see Him whom we have loved in life, and whose love prepared a mansion for us in His Father's house, surrounded by His holy angels, and the countless throng of the redeemed, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,—when we shall join patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, and all the elect of God, in singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb ! “Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.”

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
our only help in time of need I fly to Thee for

succour. Look upon me, O Lord, with the eyes of Thy mercy ; give me comfort and sure confidence in Thee ; defend me from the danger of the enemy, and keep me in perpetual peace and safety. Grant that the sense of my present weakness may add strength to my faith, and seriousness to my repentance ; that if it shall be Thy good pleasure to restore me to my former health, I may lead the residue of my life in Thy fear and to Thy glory ; or else give me grace so to take Thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, I may dwell with Thee in life everlasting.

Be pleased, O Lord, to give me a right discerning of the things belonging to my peace. May I share in the joy which the Saviour promised as the portion of His disciples—the joy which no man can take from me. Oh let not pain, or distress, or trial of any kind, sink me into despondency, or render me impatient or fretful ; but may I have grace to improve every visitation, so that I may be brought nearer to Thee, and be more conformed to the image of my blessed Redeemer. Give me to feel that there can be no greater comfort than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adver-

sities, troubles, and sicknesses. Help me ever to bear in mind that my Saviour Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain ; that He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. May I be brought to know that even thus our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life.

O gracious and merciful God, wash and cleanse my soul with the blood of Thy Son, and the graces of Thy Spirit, that it may be delivered from all the defilements which it has contracted in this present evil world, and be found safe and happy in the hour of death, and in the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fit me, O Lord, for living or dying, that it may be unto me Christ to live, and gain to die ; and that in all things I may find cause to glorify Thy name. If Thou shalt be pleased to release me from my present distress, and to add to me a yet further term of life, oh, that I may live to Thee, to do Thee better service, and bring Thee greater glory ! Or if Thou hast determined that this sickness shall be unto death, prepare me, O

merciful God, by Thy grace for Thy blessed self; and grant me a safe and peaceful passage out of this mortal life to a heavenly and immortal. Carry me safe through the valley of the shadow of death, and let me find a joyful admission into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord.

Let me be Thine in life and death, and for evermore, through the all-sufficient merits and mediation of Thy dear Son, our most prevailing Advocate and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.—
AMEN.

Be *patient*—life is very brief,
It passes quickly by;
And if it proves a troubled scene,
Beneath a stormy sky,
It is but like the shaded night,
That brings a morn of radiance bright.

Be *hopeful*—cheerful faith will bring
A living joy to thee,
And make thy life a hymn of praise,
From doubt and murmur free;
Whilst like a sunbeam thou wilt bless,
And bring to others happiness!

Be *earnest*—an immortal soul
Should be a worker true ;
Employ thy talents for thy God,
And ever keep in view
The judgment scene—the last great day
When heaven and earth will pass away.

Be *holy*—let not sin's dark stain
Thy spirit's whiteness dim—
Keep close to Jesus 'mid the world,
And trust alone in Him ;
So, midst thy business and thy rest,
Thou wilt be comforted and blest.

Be *prayerful*—ask, and thou wilt have
Strength equal to thy day ;
Prayer clasps the hand that guides the world :
Oh, make it then thy stay !
Ask largely, and thy God will be
A kindly giver unto thee !

Be *ready*—many fall around—
Our loved ones disappear ;
We know not when our call may come,
Nor should we wait in fear :
If ready, we can calmly rest ;
Living or dying, we are blest !

ANON.

1 CORINTHIANS III. 22.

If God is mine, then present things,
And things to come, are mine ;
Yea, Christ, His Word, and Spirit too,
And glory all divine.

If He is mine, then from His love
He every trouble sends :
All things are working for my good,
And bliss His rod attends.

If He is mine, I need not fear
The rage of earth and hell ;
He will support my feeble power,
Their utmost force repel.

If He is mine, let friends forsake,
Let wealth and honour flee,—
Sure He who giveth me Himself
Is more than these to me.

If He is mine, I'll boldly pass
Through death's tremendous vale ;
He is a solid comfort, when
All other comforts fail.

Oh, tell me, Lord, that Thou art mine !
What can I wish beside ?
My soul shall at the fountain live,
When all the streams are dried.

LUKE XXII. 42.

One prayer I have—all prayers in one—
When I am wholly Thine :
Thy will, my God, Thy will be done,
And let that will be mine.

All-wise, almighty, and all-good,
In Thee I firmly trust ;
Thy ways, unknown or understood,
Are merciful and just.

May I remember that to Thee
Whate'er I have I owe ;
And back, in gratitude from me,
May all Thy bounties flow.

Thy gifts are only then enjoy'd
When used as talents lent :
Those talents only well employ'd
When in Thy service spent.

And though Thy wisdom takes away,
Shall I arraign Thy will ?
No ! let me bless Thy name, and say,
“ The Lord is gracious still.”

A pilgrim through the earth I roam,
Of nothing long possess'd ;
And all must fail when I go home,
For this is not my rest.

Write but my name upon the roll
Of Thy redeem'd above ;
Then, heart and mind, and strength and soul
I'll love Thee for Thy love.

XVIII.
Contentment.

PHIL. iv. 11.

“ I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

How few among us have made this advancement in knowledge ! How ready are we, when anything thwarts our inclinations, disarranges our plans, or affects our interests, to fret and murmur—to sit down in gloomy despondency, and say with the patriarch, “ All these things are against me !” The reason is, because we have not, like the apostle, been “ learning.” Contentment is not acquired all at once. It is only by a gradual process that this spirit is fostered in us,—only by striving to bear patiently the lesser ills of life—the daily crosses and vexations which come upon us—that we can acquire the power of bearing up, without complaint, under the more trying and oppressive sorrows which, in the providence of God, fall to our share. Nor is it by trusting to our own strength that we can attain this happy frame of mind. God gives grace to those who improve what they

have already received. The oftener He sees His child putting forth the strength already imparted, the more willing is He to renew that strength. It was so with the apostle. How varied had been his experience ! and how strenuously did he seek, under every change of circumstance, to improve and manifest the grace of God which had been given him ! Think of what he had to undergo whilst “learning,” the *lesson of contentment* ! In his journeyings and perils—his imprisonments and shipwrecks,—his weariness and painfulness,—his watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness,—he must have endured many severe and painful privations ; but all the while he was “learning,” and all the while realising more fully that the grace of God was sufficient to enable him to undergo the countless trials which had been allotted. By degrees he had been instructed not to murmur at the allotments of Divine Providence,—not to be envious at the prosperity of others,—and not to repine when his comforts were removed.

And this, Christian, was no easy lesson. To be able to use the language of St Paul marks a great advancement in the divine life. It is often a trying thing to see the wicked prosper-

ing,—free from trouble and anxiety,—unvisited by misfortune or calamity ; and yet, amid suffering, and sickness, and distress, to cherish a contented spirit—to continue patient and trustful and uncomplaining. Not unfrequently, alas, the language of the heart is similar to that of David, “ Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world : they increase in riches, Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.”

Reader, it is the *triumph* of true religion that it can stand such a shock—that it can so fill the heart with peace, so animate it with hope, and so establish its faith and trust in God, that trials, reverses, sicknesses, and sorrows, only attract the believer *nearer to the bosom of his God*. And, in truth, it is not strange that they should do so. If I find that my God has comforted me under a small trial, shall I not repair to Him under a heavier one ?—if He has spoken to me in accents of intenser love while suffering was pressing upon me than at other times, shall I not instantly flee to Him when my troubles return ?—and if His grace has brought me forth

out of one affliction, wiser, better, more earnest, self-denying, humble, and resigned, oh, to whom should I rush with greater eagerness and urgency, when the flood of sorrow is overwhelming me, than to Him, who, having “given His own dear Son for me, shall with Him also freely give me all things” needful for my present emergency?

Besides, dear reader, never forget the *necessity* of trial. Assuredly God does not send trouble or sickness or poverty merely to fret and annoy His children—to render them unhappy and discontented. No; but forasmuch as our natures are sinful, and must be sanctified,—forasmuch as we are wilful, and must be brought to obedience,—forasmuch as every remnant of the evil principle must be removed, ere we can enter the kingdom of heaven,—God tries His children, not by a steady course of prosperity, nor by a long-continued and uniform adversity, but by transition from the one to the other. He knows, that the grace which might be sufficient for the day of sunshine, will not bear us up amid darkness and tempest,—that the virtues which appear in the Christian when all is serene and tranquil, might be crushed and deadened amid

reverses and disappointments. And, as it is His purpose to strengthen the Christian character—to develop it more and more, until it is fitted for His own immediate presence—He makes the believer's path one of varied experiences,—of joy and sorrow,—of health and sickness,—of prosperity and adversity. But then, new grace is imparted for every new form of trial, and new traits of character come into view in these rapid transitions of life. For, as the gold or the diamond, unsubjected to the crucible and to other agencies, might have continued to shine with steady beauty and brilliancy, but not with the peculiar beauty effected by chemical changes ; so, in Christian life, many a beautiful trait of character would have remained undiscovered throughout unbroken prosperity or long-continued adversity. There might have been always the *reality* of religion, but not that peculiar manifestation which is produced, in the transition from the one to the other. If never tried by sickness and suffering, never would the Christian be able to say with the apostle, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content ;” and he would therefore fail to produce one of the most precious *fruits* of religion

in the soul—the conviction that God is right in all His ways.

Consider, too, that many of the external evils are of our own choice. We have brought them on ourselves. They are the fruit of our own doings,—it may be of our pride and selfishness, our worldliness, and waywardness, and folly. Why, then, be impatient and discontented under those evils which we ourselves have chosen? Why murmur and repine because these trees have borne their natural fruit?

Or, it may be, these apparent evils are beyond our control. We have no power to prevent them. Some, indeed, arise out of the very condition of our nature. And can we reasonably expect that the very nature of things should be altered so as to secure our ease and comfort?

Reflect, too, that the worst we have to suffer is far less than we deserve, and the least we enjoy far more than in justice we could expect. Christian, when you remember for how many years you lived in forgetfulness of God, and yet during the whole of that period were nurtured by His parental care,—when you consider for how long a time you continued in carelessness and indifference, and yet even then were sought

and found by the influence of His good Spirit, and brought to the knowledge and love of Christ,—when you reflect how God has watched over you since you have received the Saviour into your heart—how He has preserved you from dangers, secured you in seasons of temptation, supported you in times of trial, cherished you in the days of sickness, comforted you in the hours of despondency,—oh, surely you have reason to be *content* and *thankful* for the least mercy, and to be *patient* and *submissive* under the sorest trial !

Besides, who is it that measures out the changes in your earthly lot? No cross or trial comes to you but from a Father's hand, to whom you owe submission and obedience. He has appointed your present lot, and every ingredient in your cup is mingled by His own hand. In whatever state you now are, it is by His guidance that you have been led into it. And did you not promise to trust Him? Go back to the first Ebenezer you erected, when He helped you,—when by His Holy Spirit you were enabled to say, “My Lord and my God !” See you not the inscription, “Lord, I am Thine, to do with me as Thou pleasest. Lord, keep me,

for I trust in Thee.” And *now*, because He has led you for a while in a thorny path,—because some of your hopes have been blasted,—because everything is not ordered according to your wishes,—are you to give way to murmuring and discontent? Are you wiser than your heavenly Guide? Would He lay upon you an unnecessary burden? It may be a heavy one,—long and painful sickness,—days and nights of weariness and anguish. What then? All was “needed.” Thou art pained,—yes; but look not at what thou art suffering, but at what thou hast deserved to suffer. “Why should a living man complain?” Hast thou received no proofs of God’s tender mercy? God always, to His own children, sends His *staff* with His *rod*, His *grace* with His *affliction*; and if thou hast not realised that support in the time of greatest extremity, it is not because it is wanting to thee, but because thou art wanting to it, to lay hold upon it and to improve it.

And yet again, Christian, hath not God given the greatest pledge of His love and goodness that the most doubting and craving heart could desire, even His beloved Son, to be our sacrifice? and “how shall He not with Him also freely

give us all things?" His own dear Son was given to the death for us. Can we then for a moment doubt that He will order all things for our real good? And when we think of the Saviour's sufferings for our sakes,—how patiently, how uncomplainingly He bore His unparalleled sorrows,—oh, surely we ought to strive to imitate His example!—surely we have reason to be contented to be conformed and subject to the condition of the Captain of our salvation! As He was made perfect through suffering, so must we, that if we suffer with Him, we may be glorified with Him. If, then, a murmuring word or repining thought should arise in our minds, let us look by faith upon our dying Saviour, and ask our own hearts, "Was not His cup more painful than mine?" and let the remembrance of His sufferings cause us to "count it all joy" to have an opportunity of honouring God by our *patience* and *contentment* with whatever is meted out for us.

Let us also strive to be *contented* with our earthly condition, when we consider that, if changes and vicissitudes *do* come upon us, if they are as necessary as the most valued of our blessings, God has also furnished daily helps,

that we may bear them patiently and contentedly. He hath given us divine and heavenly consolations in His blessed Word. He hath promised the assurance of His love and goodness, and the light of His countenance, to carry us with comfort and dependence upon Him amid them all. He hath set before us bright examples of patience in various trying conditions of life, where we can trace the design and meaning of the visitation, its blessed results in drawing the believer closer to His God, and its final issue in filling the soul with a perfect and unbroken peace.

And, above all, *contentment* ought to mark the Christian when he looks to the future. He is told that this world is not his home, but his place of trial and preparation for a better state. It is but his pilgrimage state—his passage, and such a passage as must be accompanied with many vicissitudes—a place of warfare—a stormy sea, through which he must pass ere he can reach the haven of rest. His country, his home, his place of rest and happiness, lies beyond death's rising flood, where there shall be no trouble, nor fears, nor dangers, but eternal and unchangeable comfort—fulness of pure and

uninterrupted pleasures, and that for evermore.

What, then, though troubles rise around on every side, child of God, pray for grace to be able to say, "In whatever state I *here* am, may I be content." You have heaven and everlasting joy in prospect, and these light afflictions are only for a season. Then all shall be well; no more disappointments and sorrows; no more dark and stormy days; but the unclouded vision—the enjoyment of the presence of your God—a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Leave God to deal with you; and though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies; for He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Submit yourself willingly to the hand of your heavenly Father, to assign you prosperity or to visit with adversity—to bestow health or to send sickness; and then, although sudden passions of impatience and discontent *may* sometimes, like clouds, arise and trouble you for a while, yet this faith in God, and this hope of future blessedness rooted in the heart, will, like the sun in yonder heavens, scatter and dispel them *all*, and cause the mild

light of *patience* and *contentment* to shine through.

“ Trust in the Lord, for ever trust,
And banish all your fears.”

Trust Him for the future, as you have proved His faithfulness in the past. Be assured, in regard to everything that may yet happen you, all is wisely ordered. You know not, indeed, what the future may bring for you; but be assured that, though the furnace of trial is needed, it cannot sever you from Christ your Saviour; it cannot change your Father's love; it cannot weary out His care. Believe that, in the unknown and uncertain future, there shall not be one storm without His bidding—one pang without His presence; and stay your mind on the assurance, that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God.”

Heavenly Father, God of consolation, who knowest our frame, and how little we can endure, even though we deserve so much, be pleased to remember me in mercy! Oh do Thou either lighten my sufferings, or increase my spiritual strength; and if Thou dost not see

fit entirely to remove my burden, oh, enable me to bear what Thou art pleased to lay upon me. Preserve me from all murmuring. Give me, O Lord, the grace of contentment; and let no repining thoughts take possession of my soul.

Although Thou hast made me acquainted with grief, and my sickness is become even as my inseparable companion, yet, O blessed Lord, grant that I may not think it long to wait Thy time, when Thou art pleased to wait so long for the return of sinners, and art ever pitiful and of tender mercy! Oh, make me so sensible of Thy kindness and love, that I may be not only contented, but thankful under Thy hand!

Teach me, O gracious Father, to see love, as well as justice, in all Thy dealings, that I may humble myself under Thy mighty hand, and confess that it is good for me to be afflicted.

Give me grace, O Lord, patiently to wait for Thee, in an assured expectation that I shall one day see cause to number my afflictions among my richest mercies. Teach and help me to glorify Thee in the time of my visitation; to honour Thee by a humble submission to Thy will, a patient abiding of Thy rod, and a faithful reformation of my heart and life; that so

Thou mayest return to me with the visitations of Thy love, and show me the joy of Thy salvation, for Thy mercy's sake in Christ Jesus.—
AMEN.

PSALM XXXIX.

It is Thy hand, my God !
My sorrow comes from Thee ;
I bow beneath the chastening rod—
'Tis love that bruises me.

I would not murmur, Lord—
Before Thee I am dumb !
Lest I should breathe one murmuring word,
To Thee for help I come.

My God ! Thy name is Love—
A Father's hand is Thine ;
With tearful eye I look above,
And cry, " Thy will be mine."

I know Thy will is right,
Though it may seem severe ;
Thy path is like unsullied light,
Though dark it oft appear.

Jesus for me hath died ;
Thy Son Thou didst not spare ;
His piercèd hands, His bleeding side,
Thy love for me declare.

Here my poor heart can rest ;
My God, it cleaves to Thee :
Thy will is love, Thine end is blest—
All work for good to me.

2 PETER I. 19.

Hope of our hearts, O Lord, appear,
Thou glorious Star of day ;
Shine forth, and chase the dreary night,
With all our tears, away !

Strangers on earth, we wait for Thee ;
Oh, leave the Father's throne ;
Come with a shout of victory, Lord,
And claim us as Thy own.

Oh, bid the bright archangel now
The trump of God prepare.
To call Thy saints—the quick, the dead—
To meet Thee in the air.

No resting-place we seek on earth ;
No loveliness we see ;
Our eye is on the royal crown
Prepared for us by Thee.

But, dearest Lord, however bright
That crown of joy above,
What is it to the brighter hope
Of dwelling in Thy love ?

What to the joy, the deeper joy,
Unmingled, pure, and free,
Of union with our living Head—
Of fellowship with Thee ?

This joy e'en now on earth is ours ;
But only, Lord, above,
Our hearts, without a pang shall know
The fulness of Thy love.

There, near Thy heart, upon the throne,
Thy ransom'd Bride shall see
What grace was in the bleeding Lamb,
Who died to make her free !

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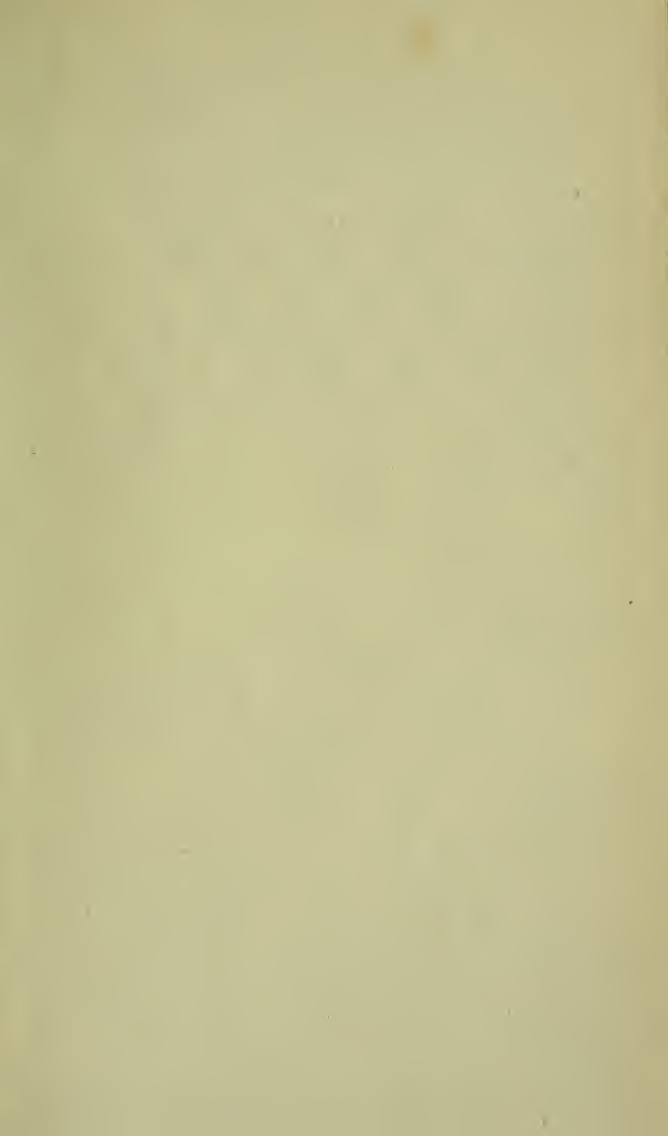
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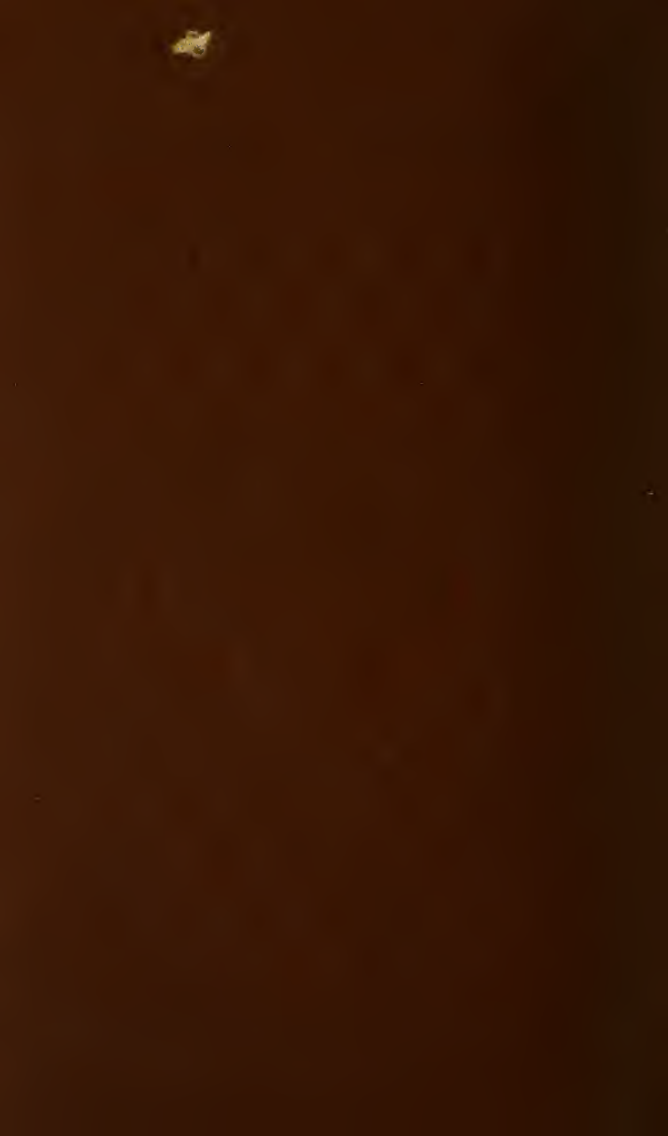
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